

BUSES

February 2000

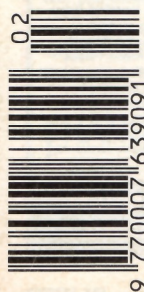
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759. Potteries, UK Buses November 1999. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer with fleet numbers announced to aid with vehicle identification. Mainly around Hanley bus station, town centre and Stoke upon Trent.
758. West Midlands, UK Buses 1997-99. We start with bright sun on Dudley bus station in November 1997 then forward in time to West Bromwich and Walsall in November 1999. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer. Fleet numbers announced.
757. Birmingham, UK Buses November 1999. 60 minutes, filmed by Dave Spencer with fleet numbers announced. A variety of central locations with low floor deckers and articulated buses in some rather dark autumnal weather.
756. Dorset, UK Buses November 1999. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer with fleet numbers announced. Visiting Bournemouth, Poole and Weymouth for weekday bus operations. New low floor Tridents in Bournemouth, W&D Solos.
755. Merseyside, UK Buses 1999. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer visiting city centre bus stations together with new Birkenhead town bus station with the electric micro buses in operation. Filmed November 1999.
750. London, UK Buses 1970s-80s. George Roberts collection, archive cine film. Includes scenes in Surrey, Morden, Wimbledon, Raynes Park, RT era, Sutton, Vintage scenes. Various shots inc. Epsom Derby Days. Huge variety, taking us from RT days, through to 1988.
749. London, UK Buses 1970s-80s. George Roberts collection, archive cine film. Includes scenes from Epsom, Alpertons Garage RT & RM, Harrow DMS, SMS MBS era, Edgware Stn RF, DMS, Golders Green, London Zoo 74X, Hyde Park, Kilburn, Ilford RTs, Romford, Stratford, Enfield Sunday services, Cricklewood, Palmers Green Garage, Aldgate and much more covering your favourite era of RT, RM, DMS etc operations. Odd weekday and Sunday services in central and north London. Vintage buses at various London events inc Clapham Common. Last section, Bromley, Sidcup, Orpington and Bexleybus.
748. London, UK Buses 1970s-80s. George Roberts collection, archive cine film. Includes scenes at Croydon, East Grinstead (XFs), Crawley (Red MBs), Purley, Reigate, West Croydon (RTs), Hatfield, West Croydon, South Croydon, plus a feature on Epsom & District in the 70s, Ewell, Cheam village, Epsom Town, Race specials, Chessington Zoo, Red MBs on 406F, XF on 406F, MB, MBS, SM, RTs etc. Derby days.
747. London, UK Buses 1970s-80s. George Roberts collection, archive cine film. Includes scenes at Kingston, nice feature on 403 route, Chesham to Cheam RT, RF, SNC, SM era. Putney, Wandsworth, Clapham Junction, Streatham, Brixton, Roundshaw, Hackbridge, Carshalton, Reigate, Superbus Stevenage, Harlow, Northfleet, Essex and nice sequence at Croydon. 55 minutes.
746. London, UK Buses 1970s-80s. George Roberts collection, archive cine film. Includes Central London, Greenline, all over adverts, Crown Point, Tooting Broadway, Bedford Hill, Sutton, Hounslow, Hayes, London Airport, Fulwell, Kew and Richmond. RT, RM, RF, DMS, RMC, RML, BOAC buses and updates to 1980s. 60 minutes.
737. In 'Crosfield' country, UK Buses July/August 1999. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer looking at buses operating in North Wales and Chester. Visiting Mold, Ruthin, Denbigh, Llandudno and Chester. Fleet or registration numbers announced to aid identification.
736. Lathamond, UK Preserved buses August 1999. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer at the annual bus gathering weekend with all vehicles based at the museum and visiting buses, plus buses operating the internal museum service. All in glorious weather.

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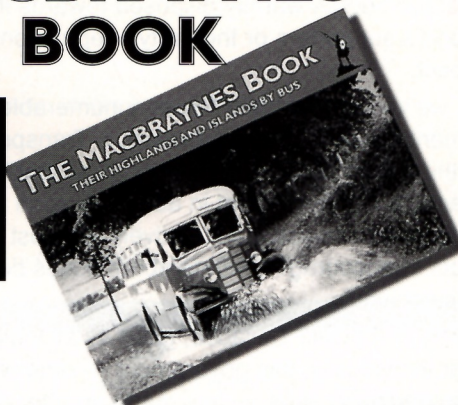
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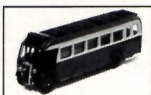


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MONDEO MAN, TWO JAGS AND REALPOLITIK

Has the government gone cool on public transport? Truth be told, in nearly three years since Labour took office it's not seemed as warmly disposed towards it as either public transport's supporters or the party's reputation would have led us to expect.

Yes, we've seen a White Paper, innumerable 'daughter' documents (one of them on buses), a Transport Bill that covers everything from partial privatisation of air traffic control to quality contracts, a big investment in additional rural bus services, a commitment to investing in relatively low-cost pro-bus measures, and lots of encouraging words about buses being flavour of the millennium.

So why complain? Because, good as all these measures might appear individually, this government — otherwise renowned for its spin doctoring skills — has made an utter disaster of its presentation of transport policy.

There was the celebrated gaffe of 'Two Jags', deputy prime minister John Prescott, taking his ministerial Jaguar for the few hundred yards from his Bournemouth hotel to the party conference while evidently trying to persuade the nation to consider using public transport. And the Prime Minister has seemed at odds with his deputy over the M4 bus lane.

Both incidents suggest a lack of commitment at the heart of government. There has never been any serious intention of compelling people to use public transport, but that impractical message seems the only one that the public has been hearing. The government's public relations machine has failed to get an understandable pro-public transport story across.

Indeed, bus travel is still declining in more parts of the country than where it is rising, even if there are some excellent examples of patronage rising in specific areas or corridors of areas where the better quality partnerships are bearing fruit.

What is doubly worrying now is that even the piecemeal approach to public transport support could be weakened as we come within two years of the next general election. Since it was elected in May 1997, Tony Blair's government has been determined to secure a second term of office and knows that, like all its predecessors, its best chance of doing that is by fiscal prudence — low personal taxes, higher 'hidden' taxes on certain goods and services and an iron grip on public spending.

In transport terms, that meant fuel tax rises above inflation, next to no road building and favouring low-cost bus projects over expensive trams, trolleybuses and other guided transport systems.

But the motoring and freight transport lobbies, to the glee of Her Majesty's Opposition, cried foul and forced a climbdown. The fuel price escalator has been slowed down to the point where rises above inflation will produce funds to be ring-fenced for future transport spending. For realpolitik demands that Labour doesn't alienate Mondeo Man, the middle income car driver who last caught a bus to the airport car park and helped win it the 1997 election, nor does it wish to offend its new friends in industry who need to be persuaded that it offers a safe pair of governing hands.

Of more concern to those who thought the days of providing endless road capacity were over, the 2000/01 spending round in England includes several by-passes now deemed essential. They may well be necessary, but this has the hallmarks of a knee-jerk reaction, not a considered overall policy. And certainly not one that tries to sell the virtues of good public transport.

Against that background, it's hardly surprising that the government seems also to be back-peddalling like mad away from charging car commuters for occupying congested roads at peak times. And here, fiscal prudence is blocking one chance of providing the sort of better public transport needed to woo motorists — like affordable, reliable showpiece bus services with the level of comfortable accommodation for waiting passengers that you get with even the most basic train services.

Congestion charging might just about be made politically acceptable if perceptibly better public transport was put in place before the charges are introduced, but fiscal prudence means you need to raise the funds first. And prudence wins more votes than plush Plaxton Presidents. Congestion charging more likely costs votes.

The government has begun committing itself to better buses, but it really needs to shout about what it's doing — and do more. And if the conditions are created for middle income groups to use more buses, they might begin to shout for improvements with a greater sense of personal commitment.

Now is not the time to go cool on the bus.



Above:

One product of a recent quality partnership was the introduction of seven liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)-fuelled DAF SB220GG low-floor buses on to Arriva The Shires' 321 (Watford-Luton) service. All have Plaxton Prestige bodies and are the first gas buses in Arriva corporate colours. The service benefits from infrastructure improvements made by Hertfordshire County Council. 3272 (V272 HBH) was photographed in Market Street, Watford with route branding but no destination display.

MARK LYONS

ALAN MILLAR

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

All articles, letters, press releases and colour photographs (we prefer to use transparencies where possible) should be sent to the Editor at: Buses, PO Box 3759, Glasgow, G41 5YN

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items of more general news should be
sent to the editor.

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February 2000

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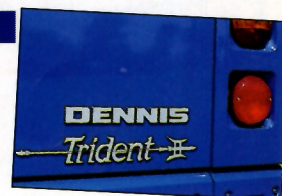
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Atlantean contrasts: Alexander-bodied Lothian 486 (MSF 486P) in its prime in the 1970s and Northern Counties-bodied North Birmingham Busways 70 (A700 HNB).
ALAN MILLAR/MALCOLM KEELEY

CURRENT ISSUES

around the industry

PRESCOTT SETS OUT GOVERNMENT'S 10-YEAR TRANSPORT VISION

Deputy prime minister John Prescott has announced a 10-year plan to transform Britain's transport systems.

Day-to-day responsibility for implementing the £80 billion vision has been vested with Lord (Gus) Macdonald, the Minister for Transport who is to report back to Mr Prescott by the middle of this year with a firm timetable and an agreed financial package.

The deputy prime minister says the 10-year programme will tackle traffic congestion in part by building by-passes to make life easier for motorists and business. On public transport, his promise is that 'we shall see more light rail systems, giving people a modern, attractive alternative to the car. We will also deliver high quality bus networks, fully integrated with road and rail, with satellite tracking systems to deliver real time passenger information'.

He added: 'And across the nation, we will put in place a one-stop-shop telephone enquiry service. This will provide for fully integrated journeys, backed up with a single ticket covering all modes of travel.'

On 16 December, three days after the 10-year vision was outlined, Lord Macdonald announced a £754.9 million spending allocation for local transport projects in England in 2000/01. This programme includes 21 major projects costing £29.3 million, of which 18 are by-passes and other roads.

The other three are bus-based public transport projects, the biggest of which is the £17 million Scarborough integrated transport scheme which combines a new southern by-pass with park-&-ride

facilities; £10.5 million has been allocated for the A641 Manchester Road quality bus priority scheme in Bradford; and an £8.3 million town centre strategy for West Bromwich will give the West Midlands town a new bus station closer to its Midland Metro station.

Despite the West Bromwich investment, councils in the West Midlands are unhappy that their appeal for £400 million worth of public transport investment — including a transport interchange for Birmingham airport and extensions to the Metro — has been ignored; the councils want public transport projects to be implemented ahead of the introduction of congestion charging and workplace car parking tax.

On the other hand, the allocation of £15 million for the London Bus Priority Network, together with extra funding for other borough-led bus priorities in London, has been welcomed by London Transport Buses.

The 10-year plan complements the publication of the Transport Bill summarised in *Buses* last month. Since then, it has emerged that the Bill also contains powers to phase out fuel-duty rebate in its present form.

Also, the Confederation of Passenger Transport has reminded us that, contrary to what we said last month, quality contracts are more than just quality partnerships on a statutory basis; they are more akin to a franchising system, as local authorities would be able to award single operators exclusive rights to individual routes. 'We believe they would be expensive, bureaucratic and inflexible, bringing no tangible benefits to bus passengers,' says CPT.

MTL TO BE TAKEN OVER?

The new century began with press reports that MTL Services, the only former PTE bus company still independent of large groups, was in discussions with an unnamed possible buyer.

Following its privatisation in 1992, Liverpool-based MTL expanded on its home patch in Merseyside, into parts of Lancashire and Greater Manchester, acquired London Northern in the London Buses privatisation in 1994 and went on to secure the rail franchises for Merseyrail Electrics and what now is Northern Spirit. It then pulled out of Manchester, its plans for flotation were abandoned, London Northern was sold to Metroline and the company was refinanced with a stake taken by venture capitalists.

Having accumulated £50 million of debt, it faces rapidly falling subsidies for the Merseyrail franchise.

In the absence of any confirmation or denial, new year press speculation centred on the possibility of Stagecoach — mooted in the past as a possible buyer — being the likely purchaser. FirstGroup has denied any interest and National Express is reported to have played down suggestions that it is the bidder.

It has been speculated that MTL could end up being sold for a very low price and one industry source has suggested rivals might prefer the company to go into receivership so they can pick up the assets and services they want at a distressed price.

While MTL's latest crisis unfolded, the Merseyside Bus Club marked the 30th anniversary of Merseyside PTE's formation, on 1 December, with a gathering of five Leylands and AECs in constituent municipal fleets' liveries.

R. L. WILSON



DUNN-LINE ENDS 1999 WITH SIXTH PURCHASE

Dunn-Line, the rapidly expanding Nottingham coach operator, ended last year by acquiring the shrunken remnants of Seamarks of Luton — its sixth takeover of 1999.

Latterly, Seamarks — once one of the coach industry's leaders with a reputation for buying the best vehicles on the market — had reduced its bus and coach fleets and had been in trouble with the traffic commissioner over vehicle maintenance; at the time of the takeover, it had 20 vehicles.

Nonetheless, the deal takes the Dunn-Line fleet up to 150 vehicles in the east, west and north Midlands, Luton and London.

EASTBOURNE INVITES PRIVATE BIDS

As reported in last month's Fleet News, it looks like Eastbourne Buses — the second smallest of the 17 surviving municipal fleets — could be the next to be at least partially sold to the private sector.

Eastbourne Borough Council has invited bids from companies prepared to take a part stake in the business which runs around 50 buses and coaches and which is understood to have suffered a fall in profits; the company also is in a state of managerial limbo, following previous managing director David Howard's move to the Isle of Man and the

appointment of finance director Anne Clark as acting MD.

Early suggestions are that Go-Ahead, which runs Brighton & Hove farther along the Sussex coast, may be the front runner to buy into Eastbourne, but discussions are also reported to have been held with Arriva (which has supplied around half of its modern fleet), Metroline, Cars Carianne — the bus and coach wing of French state-owned rail operator SNCF — and local 30-vehicle independent RDH Services of Plumpton. A decision was expected to be taken by late-January.



Eastbourne Buses' newest acquisition, 37 (T937 AYJ), is a low-floor DAF SB220 with Ikarus 481 body.

TERRY S. BLACKMAN

FIRSTGROUP JOINS THE SMART SET

FirstGroup has followed Stagecoach's lead by buying a 20% stake in Prepayment Cards Ltd (PCL), the joint venture smartcard company established last year (*Buses* November 1999).

First Manchester has begun installing advanced bus ticketing equipment from ERG, the Australian-owned company which has now reduced its shareholding in PCL from 70% to 50%, and will introduce electronic smartcard ticketing in the course of this year. FirstGroup intends to introduce smartcards on all its bus and rail operations over the next few years.

ERG has pledged to reduce its shareholding in the joint venture company to 20% as other operator partners are recruited. Currently, the two operators hold a 40% stake and the Sema information technology group owns 10% with an option to increase this to 20%.

FirstGroup's move comes as it

has appointed consultants to help its bus subsidiaries develop strategies to attract more customers. The TAS Partnership is to assist in developing action plans, starting in the large conurbations where FirstGroup operates.

Bradford, Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester are first in line for this treatment which will look at fares, service levels and networks. It's highly likely that these reviews will embrace lessons learned from the introduction of the Overground-branded core network in Glasgow which is already credited with reversing years of decline in bus use in one major city.

And at operating level, FirstGroup has demonstrated the immense buying power the big groups possess by concluding what it says is the largest UK fuel contract ever with BP Amoco, to buy 230 million litres a year of ultra-low sulphur diesel.

NO WAKE FOR WAKES

Wakes Services of Wincanton, the 70-year-old Somerset independent facing oblivion after its owners decided to retire, is to live on under the ownership of another of the county's coach operators.

Hulbert of Yeovil has taken over, adding the 32-vehicle Wakes fleet to its own similarly-sized operation, and pledging to continue with Wakes' 30 tendered services and contracts.

February 2000

ENSIGN SELLS ITS SERVICES AS HARRIS BUS AWAITS ITS FATE

The volatile state of London's independent bus operating scene has been thrown into focus with the sale of one prominent business and the appointment of administrators at another.

Purfleet-based Ensignbus has sold its local bus network, including services to the huge Lakeside and Bluewater shopping complexes, to a fast growing newcomer, Town & Country Travel of Benfleet.

Ensign is retaining six classic buses and its bus and coach dealership at Purfleet and says it intends to use the proceeds of the sale of the bus services to help fund a move into sightseeing tours around the world; its plans include a return to the London sightseeing market, possibly by re-acquiring London Pride which was sold two years ago and is now in some financial difficulty.

Town & Country is owned by former Harris Bus general manager Bernie Walters; until it

acquired the Ensign business, it had just nine vehicles on a range of local authority and commercial contracts.

Ironically, news of this takeover came just before administrators were appointed to run loss-making Harris Bus, which operates 75 buses on London Transport contracts in east and south-east London. Earlier hopes of selling Harris Bus to First Capital broke down partly, it appears, because operating costs are higher than the contract prices agreed with LT.

The other parts of the Harris business, including its coach subsidiary, are unaffected by the problems at the bus company.

Before buying Ensignbus's operations, Town & Country's fleet already included four ex-Limebourne Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointers repossessed after the collapse of Q Drive. R311 NGM is seen on the park-&-ride contract at Lakeside.

LEE M. WHITEHEAD



ARRIVA BUYS TWO MORE NORTHERN INDEPENDENTS

Arriva has continued its recent pattern of acquiring competing independents by taking over two 40-vehicle businesses on either side of the Pennines.

Arriva Yorkshire has acquired the Honley-based Ambergile Group whose main businesses are Taylor's of Leeds and K-Line of Huddersfield; it already sourced most of its new vehicles from Arriva Bus & Coach, the DAF import, sales and rental operation based at nearby Cleckheaton.

And Arriva North West has acquired Nova Scotia of Winsford, transferring part of the service network into its Arriva Manchester (formerly Bee Line Buzz) subsidiary before Christmas. Despite modernising its fleet with five Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts last year, Nova Scotia's former owner says profit margins are too low to justify the necessary acquisition of more low-floor buses.



T62 JBA, one of Nova Scotia's MPD Darts.

CLIFF BEETON

PRESERVATIONISTS' PLEA

The National Federation for Bus & Coach Preservation is calling for vehicle excise duty to be removed from post-1972 preserved buses.

It says the need to pay VED is one of the factors deterring preservationists from acquiring vehicles now coming out of service.

'Increased running costs, including fuel and the need to pay VED, mean that preserved vehicles are not being shown to the general public at rallies or running days as often as they used to be,' says federation general secretary Richard Green.

MAYFLOWER DARTS INTO BUS RENTAL

In a move that heralds Mayflower Bus & Coach's intention of retaining more in-house bodybuilding business on the best-selling Dennis Dart SLF, it has struck a deal to supply rental and sales company Mistral Group with Alexander ALX200-bodied Darts.

Until now, Plaxton has bodied most Darts, but Mayflower is keen to ease more business towards Alexander, hence this deal which starts with quantity orders for 8.9m, 10.2m and Super Dart 11.4m models.

Mistral, together with Arriva Bus & Coach and Dawsonrentals, has benefited in recent years from the increase in demand for short-term rental vehicles; in addition to seasonal requirements (e.g. at airports), there has also been a move towards renting vehicles when a third party's insurer will pay for loss of use caused by damage to an operator's bus or coach.

BUS PEOPLE

Tony Depledge, managing director of Blackpool Transport since 1986, has succeeded **Frank Harris** as president of the Confederation of Passenger Transport. National Express Group marketing director **David Leeder** and **Paul Tappin** of Tappin's Coaches are the new vice-presidents.

Nigel Featham, previously operations manager at Preston Bus, has succeeded **George Hurst** as managing director at Warrington Borough Transport, while Warrington's traffic manager, **Charlie Shannon**, has become operations manager following the early retirement of traffic and marketing director **David Armstrong**.

In an associated move, long-time friend of *Buses* **Thomas Knowles** — former managing director at Lancaster City Transport — is traffic manager at Preston Bus.

Mayflower Corporation has appointed former prime minister **John Major** as a non-executive director, with an expectation that he will help the company grow internationally.

With great regret, we report the death, on 1 January, of **Alan Page**, 55-year-old salesman with Salvador Caetano UK. Like many coach salesmen, he began his career with the Moseley group in Loughborough.

DIARY DATES

22 January

Omnibus Society (Midland Branch). Talk by retired traffic commissioner John Mervyn Pugh. 14.00, Carr's Lane Meeting Room, Carr's Lane, Birmingham.

27 January

Omnibus Society (national meeting). Presidential address by Ron Whittle, Whittle Coach, Bus & Holidays. 18.45, London Transport headquarters, 55 Broadway, London SW1 (directly above St James's Park Underground station).

5 February

East Midlands Passenger Transport Group. Talk by Peter Yeomans on 50 years of CIE. 14.00, Friends' Meeting House, St Helens Street, Derby. Omnibus Society (Scottish Branch). Members' illustrated talks. 18.00, Room 2, Riddles Court, 322 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh.

29 February

Omnibus Society (national meeting). Bev Fowles, managing director, First BeeLine. 18.45, London Transport headquarters, 55 Broadway, London SW1 (directly above St James's Park Underground station).

IN BRIEF

Two major operators want to build new depots. Stagecoach Busways plans to replace its Westoe depot in South Shields with an out-of-town operation at Simonside East industrial park. First Leicester is keen either to rebuild its fire-damaged Abbey Park Road depot or move to a new site.

Stagecoach Cheltenham and Prism's Wales & West Trains have improved bus/rail integration at Cheltenham. Local bus routes F and G have been diverted by the station forecourt to provide a 10-minute daytime and half-hourly evening service with an hourly daytime service on Sundays. Through ticketing is also available.

Neoplan UK, the Rotherham-based importer and coach dealer, has been sold by chairman Stuart Johnson to a management team led by managing director Chris Lavin.

Forty-one out of 51 buses based at First PMT's Crosville depot in Chester had their windows smashed in a serious vandal attack in December. Temporary replacement buses had to be drafted in from other PMT depots. A man was later arrested in connection with the incident.

Travel West Midlands and Translink have both stepped up their efforts to improve links with schools and schoolchildren. TWM is working with West Midlands Police on Operation Hackney, a project to identify and target young vandals. Translink — Ulsterbus's parent organisation — is tackling the same problem with a resource pack being sent to primary schools throughout Northern Ireland and aimed at creating more safety awareness among public transport users.

Mabex Products, the model bus transfer specialist, has published its 2000 catalogue. New owner Andy Laker points out that the company's new address is PO Box 52, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 9ZS.

The long-awaited EFE diecast model of the Leyland TD1 goes on sale this month, initially in the guise of an open-staircase Bolton bus.

The final edition of *Buses* contributor Barry Doe's *Doe's Directory of Bus & Rail Timetables* has been published. Its contents include the publisher's view of the best improvements and worst deterioration in publicity from operators and local authorities over the past 16 years. Copies are available for £5 from Barry S. Doe, 25 Newmorton Road, Bournemouth, BH9 3NU.

Dennis has opened a Scottish parts distribution centre in Falkirk, taking advantage of its close connection with Alexander's now that the two companies are part of Mayflower Bus & Coach.

M-TRAVEL CLOSES DOWN

M-Travel, the Newport, Isle of Wight operator best remembered for introducing the first open-top minibus service in June 1995, closed down on 26 November after two-and-a-half years of financial struggle; nine jobs were lost, reports KEITH BOWLER.

It began operating shoppers' services in Newport in 1991, running in conjunction with Southern Vectis and using a small fleet of 16-seat Ford Transits acquired from former National Bus Company fleets; some journeys were supported by Isle of Wight Council. It later expanded to Ventnor and Cowes.

The open-top circular Ventnor sightseeing tour was aided by a

one-off council grant, but lasted only two seasons as there was insufficient custom. B261 MDL, the ex-Southern Vectis Transit converted for the tour, has since been sold.

Much of the fleet was destroyed in a later depot fire, adding to financial strains on the business which traded latterly under a creditors' voluntary arrangement.

Southern Vectis provided temporary replacements for most of M-Travel's services.

M-Travel's B259 MDL, an ex-Southern Vectis Carlyle-bodied Ford Transit, operating Ventnor town service 31 in May 1995.

KEITH BOWLER



WINNERS AND LOSERS

Last year was the best for bus and coach sales since new bus grants began to be phased out in 1980. Some manufacturers did markedly better than others. ALAN MILLAR reveals the figures and considers the background

If you need graphic evidence of the phenomenal success of the Dennis Trident, look no further than the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders' statistics for bus and coach deliveries during 1999.

Thanks to the Trident's dominance of the low-floor double-deck market and the continuing success of the Dart, especially the surprisingly run-away sales of the little Mini Pointer Dart, Britain's largest domestic bus maker came within 41 vehicles of selling 2,000 chassis last year — 701 more than in 1988 and 592 up on 1997. It achieved that despite the Javelin's rapidly falling share of a less rapidly falling coach market.

Dennis was boosted by Volvo's lack of a low-floor double-decker until B7L deliveries began trickling through in the last months of 1999. Not only has Volvo lost overall market leadership to Dennis for the first time, but it sold

696 fewer vehicles than in 1998 and 734 fewer than in 1997.

Things should get better for Volvo this year, as there is a substantial backlog of B7L double-deckers to be supplied, while the B6BLE midibus has secured some new customers and a niche market may be an emerging for 18m articulated single-deckers, starting with the B10LA and moving on to the B7LA.

But executives in Gothenburg ought to be worrying about two underlying trends — the loss of 12m heavy duty single-deck business to MAN and Mercedes-Benz, and significant erosion of Volvo's long standing leadership of the coach market. Around half of Volvo's UK sales last year were of

coaches, mostly B10Ms; that model is likely to be revamped to meet next year's Euro 3 emission standards. And it's worth remembering that nearly 10% of Volvo's global sales are in the UK which is the only one of the five major European markets where it has a dominant share.

Scania, soon to be an arm's length Volvo subsidiary, leapfrogged over Dennis to become the second largest coach supplier, but it dropped back in the bus market. While the L94UB is one of FirstGroup's standard buses, there have been few other orders for this model and sale of the stock of step-entrance East Lancs Cityzen-bodied N113s seems set to leave Scania without

anything to offer double-deck buyers; N113 customers Nottingham, Brighton & Hove and Newport have all bought Tridents.

For Optare, Britain's only other volume bus manufacturer, 1999 was astonishingly successful. Unit sales grew by 17% between 1997 and 1998, but Scania and DAF Bus grew faster. Last year, thanks to the low-floor minibus revolution, the Solo has led a 37.5% upsurge in sales, propelling Optare back into third place and we gather at least one big group is poised to announce quantity orders for Solos.

DAF Bus also grew again, despite losing ground in the coach market. As in 1998, it has benefited no end from the fact that Arriva — which imports, retails, rents and leases DAFs — also operates many in its UK bus fleets; with its Cummins-engined SB120 'Dart clone' midibus due to come on stream this year, this Dutch marque may grow at Dennis's expense.

The two main German manufacturers have had mixed years. MAN, whose 18.220HOC is reckoned to be the best-selling 12m bus thanks to Stagecoach taking it in place of the Volvo B10M, came within 13 sales of matching Scania. It also sold more coaches and ought to grow more this year when its low-floor midibus finally arrives.

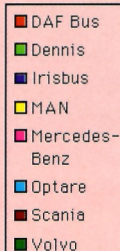
Despite being the main part of the world's biggest bus manufacturer, Mercedes-Benz lost ground in both the mainstream market and in the fast diminishing light-truck derived sector dominated by its Vario. It should do better this year as FirstGroup and maybe others buy 12m Citaros.

Irisbus, still better known as Iveco, achieved three figure sales for the first time; this has been achieved entirely with EuroRider and EuroMidi coaches, taking it to third place in the shrunken coach sector after just four years. Iveco's growth has been one of the thorns in Volvo's side and Irisbus — Europe's third biggest bus and coach manufacturer and bigger than Volvo in the main west European markets — expects far bigger things here. The launch of the Optare-assembled, Renault-designed Agora Line later this year should provide it with a further fillip.

Above left:
Volvo's relatively poor showing was cushioned by deliveries of 40 Wright Fusion-bodied 18m B10LA artics to FirstGroup. As reported on page 54, the last 10 have gone into service with First Glasgow.
MURDOCH CURRIE



1999 SALES



MANUFACTURER	1999 TOTAL	1999 MARKET SHARE %	1998 TOTAL	1998 MARKET SHARE %
Bova	56	1.23	55	1.30
DAF Bus	349	7.67	280	6.63
Dennis	1,959	43.07	1,258	27.66
Irisbus	117	2.57	51	1.20
MAN	276	6.07	107	2.53
Mercedes-Benz	106	2.33	129	3.05
Optare	370	8.13	269	6.37
Scania	289	6.35	323	7.64
Volvo	909	19.99	1,605	37.99
Other British	3	0.06	15	0.35
Other imports	113	2.48	132	3.12
TOTAL BRITISH	2,536	55.76	2,292	54.25
TOTAL IMPORTS	2,012	44.24	1,933	45.75
OVERALL TOTAL	4,548		4,225	
Truck-derived midibuses	680		1,239	

Source: Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders

NATIONAL EXPRESS BUYS INTO AMERICAN TRANSIT MARKET

National Express Group has followed FirstGroup into the United States urban public transport market by paying £106.5 million for ATC Group, a 2,000-vehicle operator based in Chicago and operating across the US.

Like First Transit — the former Ryder ATE business now owned by FirstGroup — ATC provides scheduled local bus services on behalf of municipalities. There are two parts to the business, the scheduled bus operation which manages 2,000 buses in 31 cities in 13 of the 50 states, and Pittsburgh-based Intelitran which runs dedicated services for disabled people and takes the total ATC operation into 44 cities in 18 states.

ATC has grown at a rate of 25% a year since 1994 and has retained over 95% of its contracts in that period. Its bus service contracts include the largest privately-operated scheduled bus

service in the US, in Las Vegas; other prominent contracts are in San Diego, New Orleans, Phoenix, Denver, Austin and Chicago.

NatEx believes there are substantial growth opportunities as 16% of scheduled bus services and 80% of the growing dial-a-ride market are provided by private sector companies like ATC, with a strong chance that more routes will be put out to tender. In total, around 40,000 urban transit buses are operated on North American scheduled services.

ATC is to become part of NatEx's North American division headed by Larry Durham, adding over 2,000 buses to a fleet of 5,600 yellow school buses.

An American Neoplan AN440 operating for The Ride, the Regional Transportation District in Denver, Colorado where ATC holds bus operating contracts.
ALAN MILLAR



COACH USA BEGINS TO GROW

Coach USA, Stagecoach's North American subsidiary, has invested around £27 million acquiring 11 coach and taxi companies in the US and Canada to increase its 9,800-vehicle fleet by over 1,000 vehicles.

In its first three months in Stagecoach ownership, Coach USA made operating profits of £34.2 million and is

targeted to double in size within the next three years.

Its acquisitions are based in Chicago, Palm Beach, Corpus Christie, New Jersey, Jacksonville, San Antonio, Atlanta, Miami, Sarasota (Florida), San Diego and in Ontario, Canada; they include several Gray Line Tours franchise holders.

NORGEBUSS: ARRIVA DEPARTA

Arriva has dropped plans to acquire 830-vehicle Norgebuss, Norway's largest private bus operator. It says the deal on offer would have generated a limited financial return. Arriva had been forced to admit its interest in Norgebuss after news of negotiations leaked out at the same time as Stagecoach announced its sale of Swebus to Norwegian-owned Concordia Bus.



MOTORISTS FORCE US BUS CUTS

Bus services in Seattle may be cut by up to a third as a result of a funding crisis created by a referendum. Voters in Washington State have endorsed a reduction in annual vehicle excise duty to US\$30 from several hundred dollars.

ZERO-EMISSION OLYMBUS FOR NEW SOUTH WALES

In Australia, the New South Wales Department of Transport has commissioned New Zealand coach manufacturer Designline and UK electric vehicle company Wavedriver (owned until recently by PowerGen) to design and build the Olymbus, a 60-passenger, fully-accessible battery-powered citybus.

It is based on an MAN chassis and uses lead acid batteries with an on-board auxiliary power unit to add the option of recharging en route as well as in the depot.



An Olymbus operating last December in Christchurch, New Zealand.
SIMONE THORNTON

MORE GAS BUSES GO TO OZ

Two Australian city fleets are investing in European compressed natural gas (CNG) buses.

Brisbane has ordered 120 Scania's which are to be assembled over the next three years in the city council's own workshops from kits supplied by Scania and Australian bodybuilder Volgren; they will be Brisbane's first Scania's and use a new design of 9litre CNG engine.

TransAdelaide, meantime, has ordered 50 CNG-fuelled MAN NL202s with locally-built Australian Bus Manufacturing bodies; it already has 110 CNG-fuelled MANs.

SUPER TROLLEYS FOR ROUEN

The northern French city of Rouen is investing in an electronic cross-town rapid transit network using 57 Civas guided trolleybuses — tram-styled vehicles built by

Irisbus and French technology company Matra. Pending their arrival, 38 Irisbus Agora diesel buses will be adapted to serve the 49-station line.

GLOBAL MARKET SET TO GROW

World-wide bus and coach sales could grow by 22% over the next five years, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit.

In a report by British bus industry expert Doug Jack, the EIU predicts that sales will rise from an estimated 183,000 last year to over 222,000 in 2005. It anticipates most growth to be in Eastern Europe (especially Poland and Russia), South America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

SNCF BUYS INTO VIA-GTI

SNCF, the French national railway, plans to build up a 40% stake in VIA-GTI, the country's largest public transport group and a joint venture partner with Britain's Go-Ahead Group in rail projects in the UK and Sweden. As a consequence, Vivendi is selling its 12% stake in VIA-GTI.

FOUR MAKERS TO BUILD CITY BUSES IN PAKISTAN

As part of a government plan to replace 15,000 worn-out city buses over the next three years, Pakistan's central planning authority is setting up agreements with four manufacturers to assemble new buses within its borders.

One of the first to sign up is Scania which will assemble chassis and bodies, using locally manufactured components where possible.

VOLVO AND MITSUBISHI TIE THE KNOT

Volvo and Mitsubishi have signed the final agreement to set up a strategic alliance of their truck and bus manufacturing interests.

The deal, the latest phase of the rapid globalising of bus and truck manufacturing, gives Volvo a 5% share of Mitsubishi Motors, but this is to be converted into a 19.9% stake in a new Mitsubishi truck and bus division which is to be formed before the end of next year.

The Swedish and Japanese manufacturers already sell each other's products in some markets and the alliance is to lead to regional co-operation in Asia, South America, Australia and New Zealand.

They are to jointly develop a new generation of medium weight trucks, an arrangement which may well spill over into the bus and coach market.

CHILE TO USE MOBILE VENDING MACHINES

Almex is negotiating supply agreements with bus operators in Santiago, Chile, to provide them with its mobile ticket vendor, a machine designed to reduce passenger boarding times and the opportunity for fraud.

The machine enables passengers to make payments quickly on board by cash or smartcard, and provides

operators with improved cash and data security.

Almex says that unattended vending also frees the driver to concentrate on driving. It is supposed to be resistant to heat, dust, false coins and maintenance and security problems which affect other vending machines used in the transport industry.

HINO AND ISUZU TIE UP

Japanese manufacturers Hino and Isuzu are to pool their bus manufacturing interests in a 50/50 joint venture capable of producing 6,000 vehicles a year, although this is likely to be reduced by shedding excess capacity.

The move, echoing Iveco and Renault's formation of Irisbus, follows a slump in Japanese bus and coach sales, from 6,900 in

1988 to 3,500 in 1998. The manufacturers — Hino is part-owned by Toyota and Isuzu is similarly part-owned by General Motors — have indicated that this is a survival move to protect them from financial problems.

Another Japanese truck and bus maker, Nissan Diesel, is already part-owned by Renault.

HALFCABS ABROAD

AEC ROUTEMASTER

Former RM81 and RM1271 (VLT 81, 271 CLT) were not used at all last year in **Madeira**.

In **Sri Lanka**, RM327 (with Leyland engine and five-speed manual gearbox), RM1029 and RM1413 were still in service in Negombo (40km north of Colombo) in August. At the same time, RM194, 596, 730, 1243 and 1581 (plus one other, thought to be RM1088 or RM2088) were out of use at Negombo.

RM1005 (ALC 290A, 5 CLT) has been despatched by Munden (dealer), Bristol to Wigley (dealer), Carlton for export to **Mexico**.

RM1134 has gone to **Baghdad** to raise money for charity.

RM1515 has been exported to Galicia in northern **Spain**.

RM1660 (660 DYE) is in regular use in **New Zealand** on a Queenstown-Arrowtown service.

Former **Southend** Routemaster 108 (61 CLT), converted to open-top for Beach Bus Co of Kitty Hawk, has moved — still in red livery with gold centre band — on to sightseeing tours of **New York** with New York Shafa Tours. Its British registration remains in the conventional position, with its New York registration, BE 9503, on the radiator grille. Roofed 104/23 (VYJ 542, CUV 162C) continue on sightseeing tours of **Niagara Falls**. All three still carry full sets of Southend blinds, showing such destinations as Chalkwell Station and Highlands, Thames Drive.

Ex-Southend Routemasters 102/19 (WYJ 857, LDS 280A) have been exported to **Argentina**, ex-Reading Mainline.

BRISTOL

A choice former Brighton, Hove & District open-top 1940 K5G, CAP 211, has been exported by a preservationist in Romford. Convertible open-top CAP 229 has been rescued for preservation in Britain and permanent open-top CAP 234 is similarly still in this country.

L5G GNY 915 has gone to Bruynincks, **Antwerp**.

Former Southern Vectis Lodekka LD6G SDL 267 passed to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet and has since gone to Prague in the **Czech Republic**.

Two blue-liveried open-top Lodekka FLFs at work with **New York** Double Decker Tours and advertising Continental Airlines, are 2 (BY 9589) and 3 (BE 9468); neither carries its British registration mark. Both have offside (to British eyes) doors just behind their staircases, using their original ECW doors and windows.

Old British double-deckers tracked down by JOHN G. LIDSTONE

GUY

Former Moores of Kelvedon/Eastern National lowbridge Guy Arab IV/Massey 20 PVX is reported alive and well in **Nevada, USA**, operating a free service between the Venetian Hotel and Madame Tussauds in Las Vegas.

LEYLAND

Former Burnley & Pendle Titan PD3/East Lancs LHG 537 has been exported to the **Netherlands**

Former **Leicester** PD3A/12 LJF 26F was still being used by McDonalds at Waterloo, **Belgium** at the end of October. Similar manual gearbox GRV 52D was at one of the company's Dutch sites; both were in pseudo-London red livery.

Former **Eastbourne** PD2A BJK 677D has gone to a preservationist in the **Netherlands** after sale by a Holbeach Drove, Lincolnshire counterpart.

Former **Southdown** 'Queen Mary' PD3/4 convertible open-toppers PRX 201/8B (413/4 DCD) have not yet gone to **Belgium** as anticipated following sale and were still recently with London Bus Exports (dealer), Chepstow.



Left:
New York Double-Decker 18, former Bristol Omnibus 1962 Bristol FLF6B 501 OHU, at Battery Park in September last year.



Below left:
Former London Transport lowbridge AEC Regent III/Weymann RLH61 fading away gently last summer in a garden in Myrtle, Ontario, Canada. It was the last RLH to operate on route 178 on 16 April 1971.

Pictures by
NIGEL EADON-CLARKE

BUSES ON THE NET

Want to buy a bus or coach? RICHARD DELAHOY peers into his PC to see what's on offer . . .

The technology of the Net provides an ideal way to advertise the ever changing stock of used buses and coaches available directly from operators and from the increasing number of dealers serving the industry.

So it was no surprise that Coach & Bus 99 at the National Exhibition Centre witnessed the launch of two software products, alongside the more visible new hardware from the likes of Plaxton and Wright's. **Coachsales.net** and **busnet2000.com** both offer dealers and operators the opportunity to advertise their wares over the Internet.

Potential buyers specify what they want from a menu of options and are then presented with a list of matching vehicles, some complete with interior and exterior photos. It is possible to search by vehicle makes, by specification (e.g. toilet, ferry lift, Continental door) or by price (although few dealers quote prices). The coachsales site also offers Coach alert, where operators may register their wants so that, when a matching vehicle is entered into the database by a seller, an e-mail advice is sent automatically to the potential buyer.

Both systems are easy to use, although not very many vehicles are listed at present. There is such a strong bias towards coaches that, in early December, busnet2000 did not list a single service bus. However, a visit to the sales area of the **Showbus.co.uk** site will reveal a wide selection of service buses, many from Fleetmaster's stock, while more coaches can be found at **usedcoachsals.co.uk**.

Several dealers and manufacturers also have websites, many with details of their current stock, while the London Bus Export Company

advertises its specialist conversions, like playbuses. So whether your budget is limited (£5,000 will buy a rare 1980 centre-entrance Plaxton-bodied Volvo B58) or runs to six figures (how about a 1995 B10M/Plaxton for £150,000?), if you are thinking of buying a pre-owned bus or coach, why not try some of the following?:

GENERAL LISTING SITES:

www.busnet2000.com
www.coachsals.net
www.showbus.co.uk
www.usedcoachsals.co.uk

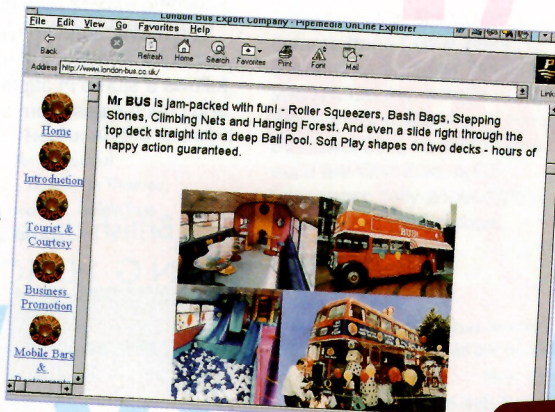
MANUFACTURERS:

www.optare.com/marketplace
www.scaniabusandcoach.co.uk/usedvehicles.htm
www.bus.volvose.se/used

DEALERS:

Brakell Routemaster Bus Centre:
www.solnet.co.uk/brakell
Chepstow Classic Buses:
members.aol.com/cclassicbus
Ensign Bus Sales:
www.ensignbus.co.uk
Holloway Commercial:
freespace.virgin.net/holloway/commercials/index.htm
London Bus Export Co: www.london-bus.co.uk

Your comments on Buses On The Net are always welcome - contact me on buses@signal-training.com.



Left:
The London Bus Export Company's website details some of the more unusual buses to be found for sale on the Net like playbus conversions of elderly Leyland Titans.

THE FENTON FILE

*An exotic Middle Eastern confection attracts
MIKE FENTON'S attention this month*

Featured this month is a double-decker built for the Middle East but earning its keep in Middle England.

For many years before the Iran-Iraq War, many British firms traded with Iraq; these included Leyland which, building on long-established links inherited from AEC, from 1975 supplied several hundred AN68/2L Atlanteans to Baghdad.

Most had Park Royal dual-door bodies, but following closure of that company, Willowbrook continued the programme, building the last 200 under licence to the same design and using jigs and fixtures transferred from London to Loughborough. Two, however, were never delivered.

A visit to Paul Sykes's Barnsley yard in April 1984 found one of the pair residing there, still in Baghdad red livery. By August 1986, it was in all-over white at Stanley Hughes's premises at Gomersal — a dealer by then owned by the same Mr Sykes — and had been rebuilt to right-hand-drive, although the former centre doorway had been retained as an emergency exit on what now was its offside.

A few months later, it was bought by Whippet of Fenstanton and the six-year-old vehicle was registered for the first time as D850 AAV.

Over the years, the body has undergone more changes. The unusual emergency exit was replaced with a conventional door behind the rear axle, the full-depth sliding windows were replaced with ones more appropriate to the Cambridgeshire climate and the front panel was modified with Plaxton parts following a fenland mishap.

A further change not visible involved repositioning the staircase from the UK nearside to a more normal offside location. It was in this form when seen in October 1998, en route from Grafham outstation to Great Staughton where it was to undertake its regular school run.



MAP OF THE MONTH

I explained last month how, from now on, this column will analyse just one map each month, but in greater depth than was possible before. I begin with the Travel Planner published by **Nottinghamshire**, which was re-issued for winter 1999/2000 and is produced by **FWT**. It may be obtained from the county's enquiry line, **0115 924 0000**, open from 07.00 until 20.00 daily.

I often castigate unitary authorities that go their own way and refuse to co-operate with the geographical county of which they form part, leading to maps with holes — something the motorist never suffers.

I am aware that sometimes the fault lies the other way round with the shire county being only too happy to disown the unitary, but the effect is the same. Milton Keynes, for example, remains in Buckinghamshire and is merely administered locally. As I have said before, it is totally different from the old 'Ashford, Middlesex' argument, because in that case Ashford was transferred from one county to another (Surrey) and Middlesex was abolished. Fortunately Nottingham City Council understands this and shares the enquiry line and this map with the county.

County doesn't disown the city

While the background is pale green for Nottinghamshire, it changes to white for the adjoining counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire — but, again to emphasise the relationship with the city, there is merely a dashed line around Nottingham to delineate the administrative boundary, and no silly suggestion that to enter the city is to leave the county.

Motorists generally carry several maps: an all-Britain small scale atlas and larger scale extras for more frequently-used areas. Public transport maps try to combine scales and in this respect their users often have more convenient maps as a result.

This one shows bus routes in green and railways in black. Route-numbers are green if seasonal, otherwise black. There is no attempt, either by colour of route or number, to show frequency. The argument in favour of that is that there is a frequency-chart and it is easier on the eye to have one consistent colour and thickness, but my preference would be dashed routes (or a different colour for the number) where frequency was, say, less than every two hours, so that one could see the core network as opposed to odd services.

In the first of his new-look columns, transport information specialist **BARRY S. DOE** takes a close look at Nottinghamshire's Travel Planner

The map has superb blow-ups of Eastwood, Kirkby/Sutton in Ashfield, Mansfield, Newark, Retford and Worksop on the main side. An index of places served also appears, as does a list of the enquiry lines of the adjacent counties — though, sadly, without their opening hours.

The reverse is devoted to the frequency chart and Nottingham itself. One cannot but help feel sorry for the county. It has so many services there is not the room for the nine-column frequency-charts that Centro does so well in the West Midlands, yet frequencies here are harder to show than for any other area in Britain.

The reason, I feel, is that Nottingham City Transport remains in the Stone Age when it comes to timetables. Not only is it one of a couple of dozen left in Britain that use the 12-hour clock, but it uses a pre-war style: 06.01 and 18.01 don't even appear as 6.01, but merely '6 1'. Such muddled thinking goes through to scheduling. Service 6 leaves town at 15 and 45 past the hour all day, but in the evenings at 18.16, 18.50, 19.23, 20.11, 21.24 and 23.00. The 81 departs every 32, 34 or 36 minutes. It is unattractive for users and terrible for any professional to summarise.

Add to that the presence of Trent which either numbers, letters or names routes according to its latest whim, and the county really has a job on its hands. It has to pack all this into two columns (evenings/Sundays and the rest) and manages well given the task.

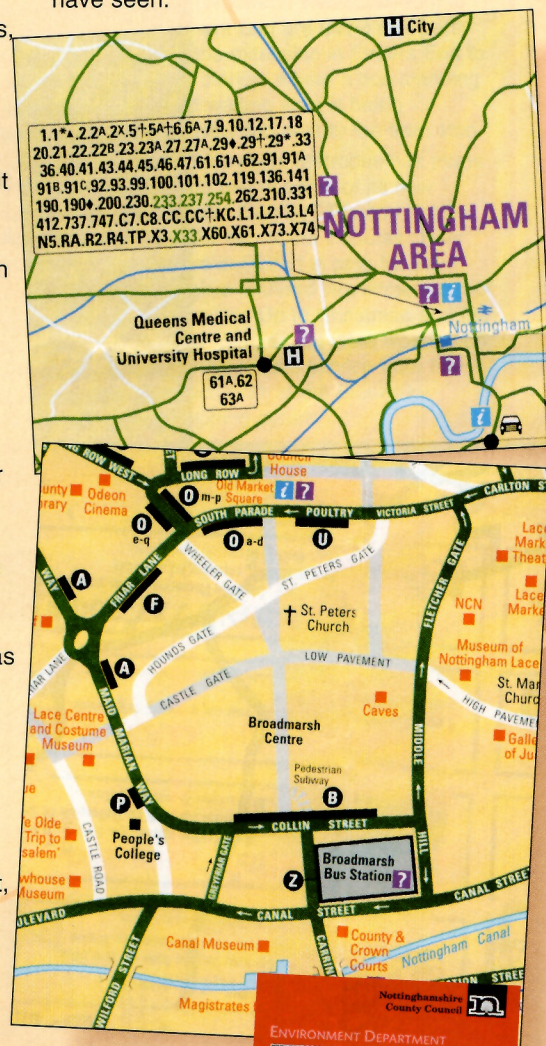
The crunch is in the city centre detail

The Nottingham blow-up is also excellent, with all roads showing reversed-out names and with attractions added, from tennis courts to libraries. The crunch comes with the final necessary enlargement: the city centre itself where the scale of the normal blow-up cannot show necessary detail.

Unfortunately, it is here that the map falls down. It shows no routes but only 26 lettered stops. A key then lists which areas of the county are served from each, but with no certainty that any one route to a given area uses all of them. And while the main blow-up tells me 62 routes pass the railway station, and allows me to trace where each has come from, I am unable to deduce where any of them goes in centre itself.

An added note is a terrible cop-out: 'For full details, ring the enquiry line.' That is not good enough. Another map — probably separate — is needed desperately to show what each route does in the city centre.

So this is an excellent map provided your journey is wholly outside Nottingham, but given that is probably not the case for most potential users, then this is one of the greatest let-downs of any map I have seen.



Top:
Sixty-two bus routes
pass Nottingham
railway station . . .

Above:
. . . but where do they
go in the city centre?

NEW CENTURY, NEW LONDON TRANSPORT

London Transport Buses will find itself operating in a new regime from the middle of this year, when the London Mayor is elected in May and the Greater London Authority begins to take decisions on the government of a national capital whose population is growing for the first time in 70 years.

As delegates were reminded at a one-day pre-Christmas seminar held by the Audit Commission, LT Buses will be a part of Transport for London (TfL), one of the main bodies coming under the GLA, though not funded by it. TfL will include several other bodies and parts of organisations, including not merely the Underground and the Docklands Light Railway, but also the Public Carriage Office (responsible for black cabs), the Traffic Director for London (he of Red Routes fame), the Woolwich Ferry, some local authority roads and some functions now undertaken by the Highways Agency.

It is noteworthy that the Audit Commission, the watchdog on public spending, should have felt it worthwhile to draw attention to the new body and its expectations for it, even before it starts operating.

Incidentally, the legislation bringing the GLA into existence was the longest Act of Parliament since the Government of India Act just after World War 2.

WHY FIRST CAPITAL DARES TO BE DIFFERENT

Leon Daniels, First Capital's personable managing director, gave a valuable insight into what makes this former independent operator stand out from its competitors in London when he spoke recently to the Omnibus Society.

There may be 1,300 staff at the company's four garages, but he tries to maintain a personal touch with such gestures as sending a birthday card to each staff member and by holding raffles at pre-Christmas staff dinners which include a prize of winning his services for a shift; the lucky employee receives his wages, but Leon Daniels carries out the work.

Not that he thinks operators can sit on their laurels. 'Tremendous lessons could be learnt from supermarkets,' he told his audience. 'You don't see biscuits displayed in the middle of shelves for cake mix, yet you see buses going to Victoria, but displaying "Tottenham" on their blinds. Ask some drivers where they were going and you would get the retort "Can't you read?", but ask where something is in a supermarket and a polite assistant will show you to the right aisle.'

In his view, driving on rail-replacement bus services is the most difficult job, with drivers being asked impossible questions about trains to Milton Keynes or Penzance. Conversely, he says the London bus network isn't confusing; the problem is some professional drivers' lack of knowledge of London's geography.

'Some don't know anywhere west of Canning Town,' he says, but he hopes that free travel London-wide for all bus staff, coming during this year, will help.

These days, he says customers are quick to criticise, and they are often well-informed when they do complain. He revealed that the changes to many routes on 18 September (designed to tie in with the opening of the full Jubilee Line extension) had caused 'the most enormous furore' with hundreds of complaints.

Fortunately, he says London operators may now give legitimate complainants an undated one-day Bus Pass and invite them to sample the services. Previously, they had to send stamps or bear the £5 cost of issuing a small cheque when trying to refund a fare or make a modest payment.

Since putting its e-mail address on its buses, First Capital has been pleased to find that 40% of e-mails received are complimentary, whereas only 2% of letters brought praise.

By tightening up on its training programme and debriefing new recruits after their first six weeks on the road, Leon Daniels thinks the company can improve morale and cut staff turnover.

This change of tack came after he was disturbed — 'frightened' was the word he used — to discover that many staff left within two years of joining the company because disenchantment set in after just six weeks.



Stagecoach's latest Dennis Tridents benefit from having full-height Alexander ALX400 bodies. Selkent TA110 (V476 KJN), photographed at Crystal Palace, is one of a few with non-matching registration numbers as numbers like 110 and 111 are available only through the cherished number procedure.

GEOFF RIXON

FARES FALL FLAT, BUT SKIP SHORT-HOP

The fare revisions of 9 January saw a drop of 10p to a flat fare of 70p for all bus travel outside central London Zone 1, albeit with the loss of the cheaper short-hop introduced nearly 20 years ago when Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council introduced its cut-price Fares Fair regime.

Within Zone 1 the flat fare is £1, again without the short-hop. A new Saver 6 ticket, a concession aimed at those hit by the loss of the lower fare, gives six £1 journeys in Zone 1 for the price of five, and has to be validated by the driver or conductor at the start of each journey. It is transferable, so you may lend it to a friend or family member.

One-day Bus Passes come in two forms, £3 for all zones or £2.40 excluding Zone 1, and can be used before 09.30, unlike One-day Travelcards which cannot on weekdays.

It will be interesting to see the effect of the changes, and whether the lower flat fares will increase passenger numbers or

even encourage LT Buses to dispense with conductors. As revealed in last month's news pages, London bus travel has levelled off, though this might be down to staff shortages and poorer reliability.

There are two new tickets. One is the One-Day Bus & Tram Pass, valid in Zones 2, 3 and 4 and which, for 40p more than the bus-only version, includes travel on Croydon Tramlink.

The other is the Millennium LT Card, which costs £3.50 (child £1). It is only available to holders of Millennium Dome tickets for travel on the day the admission ticket is valid, has the same availability as a One-Day LT Card, but also includes Connex rail services between central London and Charlton or Greenwich (which link to London Central's M1 and M2 Millennium Transit buses). The card also allows travel on N-numbered night services and, if capacity is available, gives a discount on river ferry services to the Dome.

NO CRY, BUT PLENTY OF HUE

One of the stranger facets of human nature is the desire for change, which isn't always the same as improvement. For example, London Underground's pocket tube map has changed name several times in recent years — from *Diagram of Lines to Pocket Map*, then *Journey Planner*, and is now — sensibly — *Tube Map*.

Arriva London South seems to have caught the same disease. Its latest pocket timetable for route 403 (West Croydon-Chelsham) is titled *Journey Planner*. It includes times (the Tube journey planner never did), and also has a helpful note for the innocent about a change of colour to its buses.

For the 403 passed recently from Arriva Croydon & North Surrey to Arriva London South. That means the buses ultimately will be painted red, instead of the green that all but one still are. So a note to that effect might seem sensible. Unfortunately, the bus on the cover of the *Journey Planner* is . . . blue.



Left: Another Arriva bus to go red: London United DN9 (R209 CKO), seen here in Kingston, is the first of the ex-Arriva DAF DB250/Northern Counties Palatine IIs to be painted into fleet livery.

GEOFF RIXON

NO END TO TENDERING SURPRISES

London Transport Buses is still producing plenty of surprises, even after last month's one of awarding a second tender to Connex before it has even begun its first one.

This time, Mitcham Belle — which started running the 127 last April — has won two seven-year contracts from London General. To its present requirement for about a dozen Dennis Darts, it will be adding another 15 low-floor single-deckers for route 200 (Raynes Park-Mitcham) and seven for the 201 (Tulse Hill-Mitcham), plus one conventional double-decker for extra schoolday workings on the 200. LT Buses plans to extend the 201 from Tulse Hill to Herne Hill.

The other surprise is what are described as the finalised changes to the Croydon bus network when Tramlink begins running. Route 130, the parallel bus route to the Croydon-New Addington trams, will be retained temporarily, running about every 20 minutes between 07.00 and 19.00 on Mondays to Saturdays. This is quite a climbdown by LT, albeit in the face of continued criticism (much of it misguided).

But I wonder what First CentreWest, Tramlink's operator, thinks about the decision and in

particular of the effect on its revenue. After all, the financial projections for Tramlink did not envisage a rival.

Another lesser change is that route 64 (Thornton Heath-New Addington) will continue to terminate in a one-way loop in New Addington, at least for the short-term. Smaller changes are that the three Tramlink feeder bus services gain new numbers in a 'T' series. T31 (planned as 457) will run New Addington-Forestdale via Addington Village Interchange at the same frequency as the trams, the proposed 467 becomes T32, while revised route 354 will become T33.

Complaints about the cutback of 54 (Woolwich-West Croydon) to Elmers End are being met partly by the extension in Elmers End to the station, where a bus standing and waiting area is being constructed next to the tram stop.

Meanwhile, Metrobus has made good use of some of its new Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2s for two of the T routes. They were delivered in time for the original planned November start of Tramlink. Up to Christmas and the New Year, seven were working on a short shuttle service from the coach park at the Bluewater shopping centre.



First CentreWest operated the Christmas park-&-ride service in Bromley. Among the vehicles used was Beeline Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus DW100 which came from CentreWest's Gold Arrow network.

JOHN ALDRIDGE

MILLAR'S

Tales

THE EDITOR'S SIDWAYS LOOK AT BUS AND COACH EVENTS



Whatever happened to...? ...the Dennis Trident

A year ago, we reported on the arrival of the first bodied examples of the Dennis Trident, as the first emerged from the factories of Alexander and East Lancs and the earliest Plaxton Presidents were imminent.

Since then, the Trident has gone on to conquer the rapidly transformed double-deck market in much the same way as Dennis had already achieved with the Dart single-decker. There may be rivals from DAF and Volvo, but for different reasons the Continentals haven't yet matched up to the sales performance of the Trident.

While Dennis has captured double-deck business held hitherto by Volvo in fleets like Metroliner, Metrobus, Stagecoach, FirstGroup, Lothian and Preston to name but some — and appears to be the preferred choice for people who took Scania double-deckers before — Volvo is showing painful signs of achieving the same impact in the double-deck market with the B7L that it

has managed to do in the midibus market with the B6 in its many incarnations.

As I write this, the first B7L double-deckers for London are apparently undergoing final pre-delivery checks at a dealership in the region but one loyal and patient customer — London General — has supplemented its backlog of B7Ls with an order for its first Tridents. Dublin Bus has placed faith in its major supplier with an order for 100 B7Ls on the strength of the chassis specification and the manufacturer's track record of product support, but has invited tenders for its other 85 double-deckers required this year.

And even Arriva, which has a vested interest in DAF's success in the British market, has supplemented DB250 orders with one for Tridents for routes in Luton and Southend. Dennis has no cause for worries at this stage in its low-floor double-decker's career.

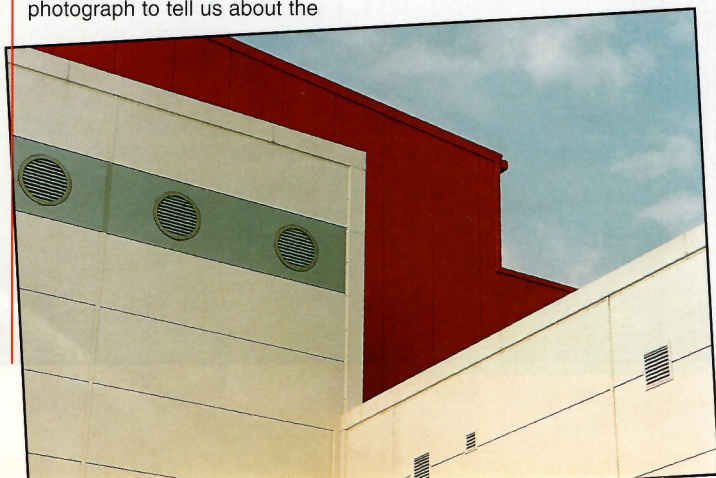
ONE I HAD TO SHARE WITH YOU

When you've been in this game as long as I have, it still never ceases to amaze how hard the public relations people will work to try and sell the story of a tenuous connection with the bus industry.

And so it was that Corus (British Steel until it merged with a Dutch company) sent in two A4 sheets of fascinating text and the most spellbindingly... well, soporific seems too exciting a word in this context, so let's just say spellbindingly spellbinding photograph to tell us about the

2,500sqm of steel cladding used to resurrect Singleton Street bus depot in downtown Swansea.

Apparently, the depot has been reduced to little more than its 1930s north and east facades and has been converted into an extension of the adjoining Grand Theatre. All of which is fascinating and, no doubt, a clever re-use of redundant bus parking facilities. Just a shame that all we can show you are Corus's somewhat underwhelming panels.



SO IT'S VINTAGE RETAINER

A rebellious soul at First Western National appears to have his (or her) own ideas about what Bristol's model initials might stand for, given the 'Slow! Vintage Bus' graffiti in the back window of one of the company's fast disappearing VRs last summer. Clearly, said person thinks the 'V' ought to stand for 'vintage', but Mark Bailey, who took the picture, thinks it's unfair to label them as slow. 'They may be slow on urban roads,' he says, 'but they fairly shift once out on the open road, even if they do belch out a bit too much, emission-wise.'

NOT SWITCHED ON

If you've been following Fleet News developments of late, you'll have seen that Travel West Midlands transferred some mid-life Leyland Lynxes to its colleagues at Travel Dundee. *The Sun* ran a picture of one of them, complete with the revelation within the caption below that was a 'new coach'.

The Currant Bun may be wrong on two counts there, but there seems no reason to disbelieve the rest of the story that 30 passengers were left stranded in a Lynx in Dundee city centre a

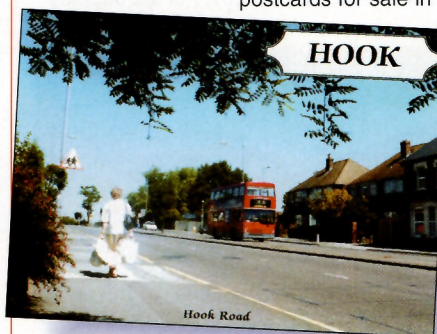
week after the first of them arrived. The reason? A new driver took over, discovered he hadn't been trained in such basic techniques as how to start a Lynx, so he had to walk off and find an inspector who had been given access to an instruction manual.

Apparently, the buses were shifted north sooner than expected, leaving no time to carry out some simple training. This may also explain why, as Sandy Macdonald reports this month, they have all gone back south again.

WISH YOU WERE HERE?

No offence intended (honestly) against those loyal Metrobus fans who write letters in their defence, but have their favourite buses really achieved the icon status in London's suburbs that Routemasters have gained in the capital's central souvenir shops?

Gavin Booth was certainly amazed to find these less than stunning postcards for sale in Kingston-upon-Thames and I



have to wonder if there isn't a more interesting scene to be painted of Hook than a lone, heavily-burdened shopper (Hook's last pedestrian, mayhaps?) being passed by a fuzzy Metrobus. As for New Malden, having once lived not far from its boundaries, I seem to recall it didn't deserve to have most of its central features eclipsed by



a partially-obscured Metro.

Now, dear readers, you can surely equal this with some of your own sightings of inappropriately used buses on local postcards. Honourable mentions will be made for your best offerings.

THERE'S LIFE AFTER BUSES

At a time when post-privatisation bus companies still tend to be run by fairly young executives, you forget that bus managers reach an age when they need no longer trouble themselves with schedules, fuel injector timings or the profit performance of the 42A.

So you also forget that they might still have a zest for life at 90, by which time many will have spent as much time away from the industry as they did within it. It was cheering, then, to read not long before Christmas that widower Ian Patey, one-time chairman of several Transport Holding Company subsidiaries, is

not only alive and well, but has just married the 41-year-old daughter of his mechanic.

With the candour of one who has lived so long, he is happy to say that, yes, there are glimpses of romance in the arrangement and that his bride loves him as a friend, but his main motivation is to ensure the state doesn't get its hands on his estate. If only he had been around when his bus companies were being privatised, for then he could have thrown a few redundant town centre bus stations and depots into the dowry.

FIRST LET'S DO SOME ARITHMETIC

My thanks to Bristol specialist Allan Macfarlane — who points out correctly that we Millars (even those of us with the anglicised version of his first name) are entitled to wear the tartan of the Clan Macfarlane — for spotting another piece of bus industry arithmetic on the back of a Badgerline bus.

According to Somerset County Council's advert, nine cars into one Southern National Mercedes minibus does go. Which it does, only there are 29 seats in the bus, and if the cars have their usual one occupant per journey, then there's still going to be an awful lot of empty seats.

As Allan says, think of the impact of instead showing a double-decker and an entire car park full of cars.



WHAT AN INCONVENIENT INTERRUPTION

I'm indebted to Mrs M for spotting, as she read through a recent copy of *The Herald*, Glasgow's quality newspaper, a tale of inexplicable goings on at Inverness bus station.

The report was written in, um, dead pan style and told how fire fighters were called to free a man trapped in a toilet bowl at said terminal. Apparently, he somehow slipped and fell backwards. 'He was lying on the floor with one leg knee deep in the toilet. He was in a lot of discomfort,' said one of his rescuers. It took cutting gear to get him out.

And we'll never know why this happened. But it's reassuring to know that, clearly, some excitement has remained in Inverness bus station since the demise of Highland Omnibuses' Albion Lowlanders.

20 YEARS AGO

Even if you were around in 1980, there's every chance that the name Beeper either escapes you today or that you're about to trawl it out of the darker recesses of your memory for bus industry trivia.

There's also every chance that those same darker recesses will also contain another character by the name of Buzby who was very much out of the same mould as Beeper. Buzby, you see, was a somewhat irritating Smart Alec bird used to advertise British Telecom; he may have been irritating, but he was very successful in selling the idea of running up phone bills for pleasure.

So, as our March 1980 issue reported, the National Bus Company entered a new year with the challenge of express coach service deregulation ahead of it, and its National Express division decided that a Buzby-like character was just the thing it needed to generate some brand loyalty for its white inter-city coaches.

If Buzby had feathers, Beeper had flippers. He was a frog who went a-woooing by National coach. He was broadcast on commercial slots on ITV — then the only commercial television channel in the country — and in cinemas. And his voice was that of the late Kenny Everett, then very much alive and well and one of the most popular disc jockeys in the country.

He croaked his way through such memorable slogans as 'It's cheaper with Beeper' and 'Hop off with National Express' as the white coaches sought the same level of recognition as Greyhound and Trailways enjoyed in the USA. The frog may be forgotten, but it helped National Express create the dominance it enjoys today.



BACK TO FRONT

I promised a little while back to share a few more of the wrong-way-round bus images several of you have been finding on your travels.

Readers are still uncovering plenty of exotic and not-so-exotic pseudo left-hand-drive bus illustrations on publicity in Britain, but just to get you into the mood for future issues, here's further proof that some weird right-hand-drive buses are displayed in left-hand-drive markets.

On the Greek island of Naxos, in the Cyclades.

M. K. Williamson found what looks like our good old computer graphics friend, the Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz O.405 adorning the local bus office. And just in case you thought of asking, neither image is in the least like the beaten-up, heavily laden Mercedes O.303s, MANs and Volvos tramping the unmade roads and sand paths.

And from downtown Sacramento in California, our good friend Michael Dryhurst offers a vision of a right-hand-drive Orion MkV so secret that he has never seen it in real life.



Make the Connection!



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SERVICE *Extra*

I was reminded recently of a sunny morning in February 1981, the year I lived in the Far East. I was in Hong Kong that day and as meetings concluded late morning, I thought it would be financially responsible to return to my hotel by bus. I stood at a stop for a while as a procession of Kowloon Motor Bus Metsec-bodied Fleetlines, each completely stuffed to the gunwales with humanity, stumbled past without pausing; their drivers and about a dozen passengers stared balefully through the windscreens and, eventually, I gave up and flagged a taxi.

These thoughts came flooding back because I was in Hong Kong once again, reflecting on the amount of personal space various kinds of public transport afford me. And not just on buses because, of necessity, I had travelled there in the most congested part of a completely full aeroplane and was embarrassed to recall that I started these articles on the premise that airlines had something to tell other public transport providers about customer service.

I still believe that, but some have lost part of the plot when it comes to space. You may rest on a long flight, but that counts for nothing if you have your knee in your mouth and end up regarding the whole journey as an endurance test. Just before I had set off, overcrowding had come up as an issue after the Paddington rail crash, with the observation that there is no legal limit on how many people you can stuff in a railway carriage.

Compared with railways and airlines, the bus and coach industry isn't doing too badly. Even in Hong Kong, the new megadeckers seem to match demand to capacity much better than their predecessors of 20 years ago and buses might make a perfectly feasible option in a business day. Indeed, in some parts of the island, there is talk of over-capacity and 'far too many buses'.

Better in the back of a bus

Seat pitch, the most tangible measure of space, still varies between vehicle types, but I think that it is an area of which more should be made in comparison to other forms of public transport — and indeed many cars. It is infinitely more comfortable sitting on the back seat of a modern bus than in the back seat of most modern cars.

The cognoscenti know the best seats within a bus. Stagecoach's fine Alexander Volvo B10Ms have an extra wide pitch on the seat over the nearside wheel and my observations indicate that regular long distance users, other than me, know this.

I know some people argue that seat pitch is all to do with complicated calculations about profitability. I am not sure I believe it totally, and when bus operators use knee-jamming East Lancs EL2000-bodied vehicles on the same duties as comfortable Sprytes, I suspect there isn't a lot of science behind it. So how about a few extra inches, please?

This was one of the things upon which the BBC's 'guinea pig' car user commented when he made his televised bus journey recently. He imagined that he would be 'strap-hanging' and was pleasantly surprised at the personal space available to him and also the cleanliness of the FirstGroup vehicle. It's not often that people are strap-hanging on a bus nowadays and I wonder whether the industry couldn't make more of this.

I was interested in the guinea-pig's cleanliness comment. The librarian of my college commented back in 1972 that she could never contemplate travelling on a bus because of 'all that coughing and spitting'. This was a bit out-of-touch even then, but people do harbour strange views about the cleanliness of buses.

And we could all help. Take a ticket out of a seatback occasionally and see when it was issued; I often find that they've been there for a while. And inaccessible recesses — or actually quite accessible ones like the areas behind bench seats — don't seem to be visited by cleaning staff as often as they might be.

Passengers hate to be ignored

I was in Southampton yesterday. A Solent BlueLine minibus pulled up at a stop. A prospective passenger moved towards it, but the driver was having a quick cigarette break away from the bus. The thing was, to do this he had to walk past the passenger as he shut

JULIAN OSBORNE argues that bus operators have much to crow about the legroom offered on today's vehicles

the doors behind him with the emergency switch. Why, I wondered, did he totally ignore her? Why did she not exist as far as he was concerned until he was sitting in his driving seat again ready to take fares?

Some of our local Arriva drivers are very good at quick explanations as they leave the bus for a minute — usually at Knaphill Sainsbury's it's to go to the loo — but others are like the Solent BlueLine person.

There is something psychological here, with drivers feeling they are taking a complete break or maybe defining work too narrowly, and it's not a uniquely bus industry issue. An airline customer service item has been to persuade staff walking from one work location to another that they are 'on duty' if approached with an enquiry.

But it doesn't leave us customers feeling terribly valued and, if we were to think about it, some of the worst offenders are senior staff like the supervisors who tell drivers to accept tickets from a missing service without apologising for that loss to the passengers, or the two people I mentioned last year who were reprogramming a destination system as though we didn't exist.

A further thought on 'no change' systems, after David R. Smith's letter in the November issue, shows how complex the background to some of these things is. On any system that issues tickets, why can't tickets be issued as change? Many operators effectively do this, but you have to take the thing to an office to get a refund.

Can't today's audit systems recognise a clearly distinguished type of ticket as money and reconcile it with earlier overpayments? That would surely encourage people to use buses again with none of the irritation and alienation they suffer when trooping off to head office to regain their 30p.

More thoughts on London United

The present and previous editor and I have been having fun recently juggling bits of these articles to fit, as all the developments in the industry compete for space. Just in case you were wondering, the December piece about London United was written before the surprise announcement of the withdrawal of Airbus route A1. If anything, the loss of its vehicles and the disposal of the Deltas from the 81 will again tip the age and comfort balance of the fleet in a negative direction.

Metroline has, however, taken over one of the trunk Heathrow routes formerly worked by London United and is operating it with new Tridents. It will be interesting to see if old tensions (especially those related to the Free Zone) resurface once they have settled in.

Apologies to Richard Cranmer for the error in his surname in December but he can at least see that his argument in favour of Metrobuses has hit home.

Julian Osborne believes Hong Kong operators' latest double-deckers, like this airport service Dennis Trident with Alexander body, offer a better matching of seating capacity to passenger loads.

JOHN MAY



What the Prime Minister thinks about public transport!

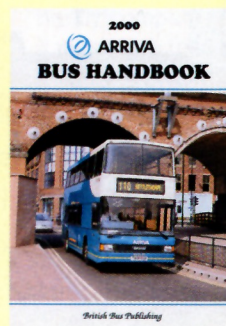
All this is in the February 2000 edition:

- **Metrolink:** Extension opening picture feature
- Edinburgh: Buses preferred because they're cheaper
- **Investment:** Government re-thinks light rail
- Bristol: Road tolls pave the way for tramways
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ATLANTEANS

LIVE ON

More like an age-old municipal fleet than many independents, North Birmingham Busways provides a quality service with its secondhand Atlanteans. MALCOLM KEELEY went along to find out how it's done



A fleet of around 20 buses, all of them Leyland Atlanteans, must be considered unusual these days. And when every one of them is kept immaculate, it is near miraculous. Yet that is how North Birmingham Busways has operated since it started running services in March 1994.

When I went for a look behind the scenes of the company's Erdington depot, I was struck immediately by the sheer

that industry was essential to them. Pooling their money to start their own bus operation was a brave move in an area where history has allowed one company to retain the dominance of its PTE predecessor. The founders were joined by Les Watts, also ex-WMT, who as engineering manager deserves the credit for delivering the immaculate and reliable fleet demanded by the directors.

Before starting up, the three directors

desperately needed a reasonably fast and reliable route in and out of Birmingham.

The new 104X, despite the sometimes dubious benefits of the expressway, could hardly compete with the trains' speed, but it was more reliable and it could get closer to people's homes. North Birmingham committed itself to providing a regular, reliable and faster service at reasonable fares, and took pride in employing experienced, friendly drivers aboard well-maintained clean buses showing correct destinations.

Anyone familiar with the company's operations will know that these objectives have been met entirely. Even today, Dave Wall claims that no

IN NORTH BIRMINGHAM



number of people working on such a small fleet. A few were maintenance staff, but the bulk were drivers, each of them clad neatly in matching green blazer, grey trousers and a neat shirt and tie. Driver changeovers are achieved by running dead to and from the depot, which partly accounts for some of the people about the place, but the remainder just seemed reluctant to go home.

The company owes its sense of order to its origins. The three owner directors — chairman and traffic manager Pat Lane, finance director and company secretary Ken Daniels and operations director Dave Wall — worked at the Perry Barr garage of what then was West Midlands Travel and found themselves at the exit end of a redundancy programme.

All three had spent their working lives in the bus industry, so finding a new niche in

had taken advantage of the seminars for new operators held by the then traffic commissioner, John Mervyn Pugh. They also minimised the risk of retaliatory action by opening up a new travel opportunity rather than going into head-on competition with their former employer. So their service 104X, running between the centres of Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield, differed from the then existing service 104 by travelling along the A38(M) Aston Expressway.

The precarious finances of the fledgling company undoubtedly benefited from the poor performance of Central Trains' Cross City rail line which was suffering both from industry restructuring and from the electrification programme when elderly diesel multiple units were replaced by equally elderly electric units covering for new trains hesitant to do a full day's work. Public transport users on the corridor

mileage has ever been lost through vehicle or staff shortages. The usual response to a rare breakdown is to despatch two buses — one as the changeover, the other to pick-up the mileage until the changeover is achieved.

Reliability has been matched by continuity, the lack of which plagues today's bus industry. A potential new rider pulling out one of the timetable leaflets dropped through households' letterboxes in March 1994 is unlikely to be disappointed; the 104X remains virtually unaltered with four buses an hour in the peak and two off-peak.

The Atlanteans were a happy second choice

The company's love affair with the Atlantean was not originally intended; the original plan was to buy a fleet of Leyland Nationals, and livery their legendary long life bodies in Birmingham City Transport's dark blue and cream. But secondhand Nationals were much in demand when North Birmingham searched for its first vehicles, so it could not find any that represented good value for money.

Opposite:

North Birmingham south of Birmingham: ex-Plymouth Roe-bodied Atlantean 31 (STK 131T) on a school contract in Shirley.

ALL PICTURES BY MALCOLM KEELEY

Opposite inset:

A line-up of ex-Blackpool, Manchester, Brighton and Plymouth Atlanteans in the Erdington depot.

Above:

North Birmingham has kept its Park Royal-bodied ex-Manchester Atlantean driver trainer in its former owner's colours and does some third party training work in addition to raising its own drivers' standards.

Chance enquiries in autumn 1993 among operators with seasonal requirements led not only to the purchase of five of Blackpool Transport's 33ft long Atlanteans with East Lancs bodies dating from 1978/79, but also to the adoption of Blackpool's green and cream livery.

A brand new company starting out with 86-seaters was optimistic in an era when the small bus is frequently seen as the industry's saviour. But the five big vehicles strengthened the foundations of the business, proving not only reliable, but invaluable in winning school contracts and building up business in a niche market for well-maintained high-capacity, short distance private hire buses.

In addition to schools and churches, North Birmingham has also discovered there is a demand for this size of bus for transport to funerals. No vehicles are maintained specifically for private hires but, by specialising in between-the-peaks markets, it finds that this work perfectly complements school contracts awarded by Centro.

All five Blackpool Atlanteans have been refurbished, the first by East Lancs, the remainder by Blackpool Transport itself which has made a splendid job of retrimming the seats and fitting new doors. Indeed, for all their earlier life by the salty seaside, their overall condition remains good.

Originally, the buses were garaged in a shared yard at Wood Lane, Erdington, but the company felt it was imperative that a depot be found to allow all routine and heavy maintenance to be performed in-house. Fortunately, covered premises farther down Wood Lane became available and, today, a third of the expanding fleet is under cover overnight with the remainder in the locked yard outside. The depot includes a paintshop and the fleet, plus business at slack times from other operators (including preserved buses), generates sufficient work for a part-time painter.

Another route . . . and more Atlanteans

A second route, hourly off-peak 113X between Birmingham and Streetly, was introduced after West Midlands Travel deregistered its off-peak journeys on service 113. This, and balancing school contracts, increased the vehicle requirement. Several Roe-bodied Atlanteans new to Plymouth were purchased, two of them coming via Southampton Citybus.

More recently, several Northern Counties-bodied Atlanteans have been bought from Stagecoach Manchester; the first two were accompanied by an older Park Royal-bodied example which has continued its previous life as a training

bus. All of the Manchester buses are now semi-automatic and, like the Plymouth Atlanteans, have had their angle drives changed to improve performance on the expressway.

Four of the Roe Atlanteans have been sold to Guide Friday, a sign of links with the tour bus operator which were strengthened in 1999 when North Birmingham won the contract to service and provide call-out breakdown cover for Guide Friday's open-top Atlanteans used on its Birmingham city tour.

Another fleet addition in 1998 was one of two East Lancs-bodied Atlanteans purchased from Brighton & Hove; the other one was sold on. More recently — as reported in Fleet News last month — First Midland Red's AEC Matador breakdown vehicle was acquired; it has a BMMO C5 front familiar to anyone who has spent

North Birmingham Busways has no loan debt and Ken Daniels says he ensures that all its bills are paid on time. That message soon gets around. Adbus handles its advertising and generates useful extra income, with one bus carrying an all-over advertisement (except on the liveried front) and another two adorned with rear-end contravision ads.

Into the south

While school contracts could endanger the tidy interiors of the buses, the company maintains close relationships with its school clients and says that, generally, problems have been resolved with the damage often paid for by parents. It also helps that regular drivers are used on these contracts. During 1999, the closure of Caves of Shirley saw North Birmingham pick up Centro school contracts in that part



time at Birmingham's Digbeth coach station. With a wry smile, Dave Wall tells me that he expects it to be used rarely for recovering broken-down Atlanteans.

Atlantean spare parts are not yet a problem, but clearly the time will come to move on to a newer type. And despite the national trend away from double-deckers, North Birmingham remains committed to using them. They are full at peaks and there is no resistance to filling the upper deck seats. There is adequate room downstairs between the peaks when pensioners are travelling.

Centro, encouraged by central government, is keen on quality partnerships and should the 104 become such a route, then North Birmingham would need to rise to meet the challenge. Dave Wall says he would consider leasing new vehicles, but he is concerned that the inferior number of seats downstairs on low-floor double-deckers could undermine their allegedly passenger-friendly credentials.

of the conurbation, somewhere that is firmly to the south of the Birmingham boundary. It is almost new territory for the company as it has become familiar to local enthusiasts by providing the link service between central Birmingham and the Birmingham & Midland Museum of Transport at Wythall — also well to the south of the city.

Even though Travel West Midlands — in common with much of the industry — is experiencing a shortage of drivers, North Birmingham has a waiting list of good, experienced drivers. It also enjoys a good retention rate. This is partly because the duties are reasonable with no late evening or Sunday work, and the company is very flexible in rostering. The directors listen to their drivers and everybody, including directors and maintenance staff, does driving turns and experiences the sharp end of the business. So the directors keep in touch and the engineers understand drivers' points of view and defect reporting. Flexibility has paid loyalty dividends with drivers willing to return favours when the

fleet is under pressure, such as for emergency rail replacement services.

Complaints are extremely rare and there are many letters of commendation on file. Induction and training are considered very important. The emphasis changed when it was decided to train the engineers to PCV standard in-house, using the ex-Manchester training bus and now North Birmingham trains for other operators. The company is accredited as a National Vocational Qualification centre, and was aiming to have all its staff trained to the appropriate NVQ standard by Christmas 1999.

While North Birmingham Busways owes its existence to deregulation, Dave Wall is not an unqualified supporter of the end of bus service regulation. He believes that there should be a framework of regulation and that somebody — either the PTE or the traffic commissioner — should have the power to impose integrated timetables. As he says, a second operator moving in to improve an hourly headway to half-hourly benefits the passenger, but two rival buses timed within minutes and leaving long gaps does nothing to encourage new business.

His wish list also includes better policing of bus lanes and longer contracts to encourage investment. He yearns for a return to electric buses and has fond memories of his early career with Bournemouth Corporation and its trolleybuses, a type of vehicle he considers had greener credentials on urban streets than anything being proposed today.

As someone whose company carefully cultivates the air of a small municipal undertaking of old, Dave Wall not surprisingly pays tribute to former municipal colleagues, especially Mike Francis at Blackpool and Brian Fisher at Plymouth.

It's also worth reflecting that, had circumstances been different, he would by now most likely have been moving into the latter part of a middle management career within a larger operator's organisation. That makes him wonder just what one of the big group's accountants would make of North Birmingham Busways. Small businesses, of course, run in quite different ways and, with care, can summon a loyalty that's difficult to achieve with large companies.

North Birmingham's success is down to its successful exploitation of the advantages of a small business. Hard work, personal financial risk, attention to detail and team spirit have delivered the quality operation represented by its immaculately turned-out fleet. When Dave Wall looks across the depot yard to a line-up of his Atlanteans, he does so with a pride that surely would not have been possible had he stayed within a large company.

Most people go to work to keep the wolf from the door, but at North Birmingham Busways I could quite believe that every member of staff shares that pride.

Opposite:

18 (JFV 318S), one of the 33ft ex-Blackpool AN68/2s which helped launch North Birmingham Busways at Six Ways, Erdington. ALL PICTURES BY MALCOLM KEELEY

Below:

The sole ex-Brighton Atlantean, East Lancsbodied 4 (TYJ 4S) in Chapel Lane, Wythall on the special service linking the Aston Manor and BaMMOT museums.

FLEETLIST

LEYLAND ATLANTÉAN AN68 (TOTAL 21)

4	(TYJ 4S) East Lancs H43/31F ex-Brighton & Hove
17-21	(JFV 317-20S, URN 321V) East Lancs H50/36F ex-Blackpool
25	(A725 LNC) N Counties H43/32F ex-Stagecoach Manchester
31/3/4	(STK 131T etc) Roe H43/31F ex-Plymouth Citybus
47, 77	(A747/57 NNA) N Counties H43/32F ex-Stagecoach Manchester
53	(BNC 953T) Park Royal training bus ex-Stagecoach Manchester
57, 70, 93/6	(A657, 700, 693/6 HNB) N Counties H43/32F ex-Stagecoach Manchester
68/9	(ANA 568/9Y) N Counties H43/32F ex-Stagecoach Manchester
72/5	(A702/5 LNC) N Counties H43/32F ex-Stagecoach Manchester

AEC MATADOR BREAKDOWN WAGON

1	(Q122 VOE) ex-First Midland Red
---	---------------------------------



AU REVOIR

Leyland Atlanteans served Edinburgh for almost 34 years. That's as long as the city's electric trams and while latterly they seemed noisy and rough-riding when compared to the Olympians that replaced them, they were sturdy and reliable buses maintained in traditional madder and white to Lothian Region Transport's enviably high standards.

They also formed a bridge between quite different generations of Edinburgh buses. The first entered service in 1966 alongside early postwar Birmingham-style Daimler CVG6s. The last 1981 Atlanteans ran briefly alongside low-floor Dennis Tridents that look set to become Edinburgh's next standard bus.

Lothian's Leyland Atlanteans ran for the last time in Edinburgh — or Auld Reekie as the Scottish capital is fondly nicknamed — on 3 January. GAVIN BOOTH salutes their contribution to his native city



Above:

Not every Edinburgh Atlantean was madder and white with long windows. This 1976 rear view of 10-year-old 817 (EWS 817D) shows an overall advertising livery for a short-lived tourist attraction on one of only 23 Atlanteans with short bay windows. Such words around the engine compartment as 'Chamber of Horrors' and 'Leyland — They Seem Alive' ought to pass without comment, for Edinburgh liked its Atlanteans.

ALAN MILLAR



A classic Edinburgh bus scene: 337 (PSC 337G), a dual-door 1969 PDR1A/1 among other Atlanteans and front-engined Titans and International Festival decorations in Princes Street in August 1974.

GAVIN BOOTH



The one that started it all: 801 (ESF 801C) back in service on 3 January — 34 years and 52 days after its first public appearance in Glasgow's Kelvin Hall. Its volunteer driver told us it felt 'different' rather than older or more primitive than the 18-year-old Atlanteans being retired on the first Monday of the 21st century.

ALAN MILLAR

TO AULD REEKIE

It was almost inevitable that Edinburgh Corporation Transport — as the undertaking was known until local government reorganisation in 1975 — would buy Atlanteans, having virtually standardised on Leylands since it started buying Titan PD2s in 1952, but rear-engined double-deckers were a long time coming to this sometimes conservative city. The trial of an Atlantean demonstrator in 1960 only resulted in more orders for PD2s and PD3s, but another demonstrator performed well in comparison tests in 1965, so 25 were ordered — as well as 25 PD3s.

When 801, the first Atlantean, finally entered service after appearing at the 1965 Scottish Motor Show, Glasgow had over 300. But while Edinburgh chose the same Atlantean/Alexander combination as Glasgow, general manager Ronnie Cox came up with a bus that was dramatically different. 801's most striking features were its 7ft 11in-long main side windows, a feature of all but 23 of Edinburgh's 588 Atlanteans. When Cox moved west as director general of Greater Glasgow PTE in 1973, he took the big-windowed design with him, but it never proved as popular and durable there as it did in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh's first 75 Atlanteans had one-door bodies, all 74-seaters on PDR1/1 chassis except for 900, the 1967 Scottish Show exhibit and an 82-seater on the first 33ft long PDR2/1 model for service anywhere.

From 1969, as driver-only operation spread, Edinburgh bought two-door 75-seaters, and all but the last six deliveries were to this layout; 150 PDR1A/1 models came in 1969-71, and from late 1972 the city switched to the flatter-profile AL-type Alexander body on the improved AN68/1R chassis — the first of 363 delivered over the next nine years. The final six, new in 1981, were AN68C/1Rs with one-door 76-seat bodies for airport, tour and hire duties. The last Atlanteans replaced the 1965/66 deliveries, and for a brief period the 540-strong double-deck fleet was all Atlantean, until Olympian deliveries started in 1982.

Edinburgh has always worked its buses hard, so many Atlanteans completed 18 years' service in the city — and a gentle retirement has never been Lothian's way. The last regular Atlantean route, the 4 (Fairmilehead-Bingham), is one I use regularly, and I was delighted late one evening last October to find Atlanteans still in all-day service just days before they were withdrawn from regular use.

At least 10 Edinburgh Atlanteans survive in preservation, including 1965 prototype 801, retained by City of Edinburgh Council for display in a transport museum it hopes will open one day, and 33ft 900 which is now an open-topper.

On 3 January, a bitterly cold and occasionally wet public holiday Monday when Lothian's own last six Atlanteans — 635/40/2/6/7/59 spruced up and brought out of retirement — provided a 20-minute frequency farewell service on the 4, the Edinburgh Transport Group ran a free half-hourly service between the city centre and Riccarton on the 45, which wasn't operating that day, using 801, airport-liveried 869 of 1967 and two-door AN68s 1

and 595. Volunteer conductors on the 45 issued Setright tickets from the 1960s to contrast with Lothian's Wayfarer receipts on the 4.

The Atlantean era finally ended at 20.12 when Olympians took over the evening duties on the 4, and 659 — numerically the last two-door AN68 delivered in October 1981 — slipped into Longstone garage for the last time. Within minutes, it and its five companions were delicensed, stripped of loose fittings and handed over to buyers waiting to collect them for new lives in who knows where.

Now, I guess I'll have to start getting nostalgic about ECW-bodied Olympians . . .



Above:

Shortly before Lothian withdrew its last Atlanteans from daily service, six others were repainted with dark navy blue in place of Edinburgh madder and sold to Yorkbus, a new operator set up by former Lothian commercial director Ron House. Yorkbus, which survived only around a month, took over contracts Lothian had run along with open-top tours sold at the same time to Guide Friday; it also ran commercial services. Former 654 (GSX 654X) in central York last September.

RICHARD WALTER

Left:

Last day in service: 642 (GSC 642X), one of six AN68C/1Rs spruced up and taken out of mothballs for their final day on service 4, in St Andrew Square on 3 January. Directly behind is a First Edinburgh Olympian in the latest version of its green, yellow, blue and cream livery with corporate logos and willow leaf stripes in the style of FirstGroup's 'Barbie' buses.

ALAN MILLAR

TRIDENT

TESTED

and found lacking in little

STEPHEN MORRIS gets behind the wheel of one of Oxford's Dennis Tridents for a bit of real hard work

'You must be crazy,' exclaimed the young reveller wearing a Santa hat. He had just boarded an Oxford Bus Company Alexander ALX400-bodied Dennis Trident in central Oxford at the height of the evening rush hour on a dark evening just before Christmas. The driver was obviously new to the job as, under the watchful eye of road steward Larry Rogers, he fumbled uncertainly with the Wayfarer 3 ticket machine that had seemed so simple in the training school a couple of hours earlier.

The passenger didn't know how right he was. Oxford Bus's commercial director, Philip Kirk, had invited me to test one of the flagship Tridents in service. It seemed ideal; the route, known within the company as 'the old man's route' as older drivers gravitate to it for an easier life, is straightforward. With only seven stages, and most fares being returns from the car parks to the city centre, learning how to issue tickets and take money wouldn't be difficult.

My first day crammed in all the ticket training, type training and route learning I could absorb. By the time the procedures in an accident were carefully explained (switch everything off and check your passengers before you do anything else) and signed a statement to say I knew where every low bridge in Oxford was and wouldn't take a 900-series (highbridge) double-decker under the station bridge, I was beginning to wonder whether this was such a good idea.

After driving around in an empty double-decker and having every possible hazard pointed out, not to mention weaving in and out of pedestrians, kamikaze cyclists, delivery lorries and millions of other buses in the highly constricted confines of the city centre ('no more than 5mph through the pedestrian area' — a chance to reach



5mph would have been a fine thing), with right angle turns which seemed impossible in this 10.5m long, 2.55m wide double-decker ('no don't use the bus lane, the trees are too close and cars tend to stick out at junctions') I was all for giving up and going home. Crazy wasn't the word for it.

'Nobody uses the buses in Oxford . . .'

We had picked up the Trident in central Oxford at 15.55 to head to Redbridge car park, and one look at the queue stretching along St Aldates as far as the eye could see (this in the city where *Top Gear* tells us nobody uses the buses, remember) meant it was one of the few occasions when I refused the offer of an open cab door. 'I think you'd better do this one,' I told Larry.

Larry is an ex-miner from the Rhymney Valley, who had coincidentally spent the first part of his driving life delivering steel tube for handrails from Cardiff to Alexander's at Falkirk before joining Red & White. Deciding in 1966 to seek his fortune in London, he got no farther than Oxford. Totally unflappable and excellent with passengers, he drove AEC Regents in Oxford, but has little sentiment for them. He recalls ineffectual vacuum brakes and air brakes that snatched, tiny mirrors — but at least you had a blind behind you to shut out the saloon lights at night.

The Trident has screen reflections. Oxford specified a passenger-friendly interior with continuous lighting, bright green trim and yellow hand poles — all of which reflect like mad in the nearside

screen. Finding bus stops in Oxford's dimly-lit streets when you're not used to the route is hard when all you see are reflected yellow handpoles. It doesn't help that Alexander and Dennis, like so many manufacturers, use very confusing switch gear; the candle-like light on the bus was down to my accidentally switching on the rear foglights instead of the headlights, so I was driving on sidelights only.

Oxford and the Trident

Oxford has four car parks on its 26-year-old park-&-ride network, one at each point of the compass on its ring road. East/west route 400 joins Seacourt and Thornhill, while 300 — which I drove — links Pear Tree, three miles to the north, with Redbridge, a couple of miles south of the centre; 8,000 people a day keep Oxford moving by using this system.

Yet the latest phase of Oxford's traffic management, the Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS), prompted *Top Gear's* recent claim that no-one uses all these buses in the city centre. You might wonder why Go-Ahead and Stagecoach would bother to run them if no-one uses them, but judicious filming of buses coming on to a stand to take up a duty, or between stops where most people alight and most others board can indeed show empty buses. And during my short stay in Oxford, the *Oxford Mail's* headline screamed out "City crippled by OTS", say traders', and switching the television on in my hotel room the first item on the news claimed people were late for doctors' appointments because of it.

OTS restricts car movements and gives additional bus priority, although buses now have to weave a much longer route round the pedestrianised centre. 'We've had to increase resource on Park-&-Ride by 10%', Philip Kirk tells me, and increased ridership has not yet matched that figure. However bus ridership overall in Oxford is still increasing and a promised rise of 10% as a result of OTS is in sight.

The Tridents are Oxford Bus Company's contribution to an unofficial quality partnership. Unofficial it may be, but the 20 buses cost £2.8 million. Apart from a handful of Olympians used at busy times, they are the company's only double-deckers and are deliberately high profile. Their lime green, blue and white exteriors and sleek, modern lines cannot go unnoticed.

So far, Oxford is pleased with the Trident. Chief engineer Peter Grimes says it is 'a good piece of kit, it does the job'. Drivers and passengers like them, but he admits they've had odd teething troubles. However he is full of praise for Dennis's response to them.

Drivers complain of slow acceleration, reflecting reports from other parts of the country that Tridents, with 8.2litre

Cummins C-series engines, are underpowered. They are quicker off the mark than the Gardner-engined Olympians they replaced, but drivers excuse the Olympians on grounds of age, and compare the 245bhp Tridents unfavourably with Volvo B10Bs. In fact there was a problem with the fuel pumps which are being replaced by Dennis.

Other difficulties have been encountered with the manual wheelchair ramps, which are being replaced with new ones which are easier to use, and brakes tend to pull to the left, which is proving more difficult to solve. Perversely, on the one emergency stop I made, the Trident pulled to the right. Front wheel wobble has apparently affected some vehicles, though none of the ones I drove.

The Tridents work hard during the day, though most work a shortish day (only one third of the fleet is out in the evenings) so average daily mileage is only about 139. At 6.4mpg, fuel consumption compares badly with the Gardner Olympians' nine plus.

Drivers complain that their suspension seat adjusts in every conceivable direction — as does the steering column — that it takes too long to find the optimum position. Peter Grimes is unsympathetic. 'It's worth taking a couple of minutes to get comfortable if you're going to be driving for

hours,' he reasons. It is well specified, but when you do a quick changeover in the city centre, you don't have a couple of minutes to adjust it.

Specification

Oxford's Tridents have a long, 5.8m wheelbase and overall length of 10.504m. Front overhang is 2,494mm and rear is 2,210mm. They have an overall height of 4.2m (13ft 9½in). The turbocharged and intercooled engine drives through a ZF 4HP500 four-speed automatic transmission with built-in hydrodynamic retarder, all mounted transversely at the rear. The centre exit on the two-door ALX400 body is close to the rear, with 24 seats downstairs (three of them side-facing tip-ups which make way for one wheelchair) and 47 upstairs; the individual seats are finished in a moquette incorporating the company's 'dreaming spires' logo. The Tridents accommodate 22 standees.

They are among 64 Oxford buses with Eminox CRT combined catalysts and particulate traps. The combination of this, its requirement for ultra-low-sulphur diesel (ULSD) and of Euro 2 engines means that the air in bus, cycle and pedestrian-only Queen Street is remarkably free of diesel



Opposite:

The Tridents have the capacity needed on late-night shopping night.

Above:

Oxford Bus Company is using the Tridents in place of Leyland Olympians, a few of which are kept for busy times of year.

odours. Peter Grimes says the CRTs have been trouble free. 'All we have to do is open them up once a year and turn the element around,' he says.

Driving the Trident

Old man's route it may be, but the 300 is a tough test for a rookie. Indeed, my mind was sufficiently encumbered with remembering the route, the stops, how to work the Wayfarer 3, keeping to time, worrying if the blinds were set right and so on that I could have been driving a Guy Wulfrunian and not realised it.

Not quite. I soon stopped imagining the Trident was too big to squeeze round central Oxford. Despite its girth, it proved



so manoeuvrable that I never clipped one of the kerbs I felt to be fair game (even if I did whack one that shouldn't have been a problem at all) on all those tight right-angle junctions in the city centre. I caught a parked bike on one tight turn.

Steering was superb, and light without vagueness; the small Dart-sized steering wheel seemed right for the job. Following the driving school's instructions, I slowed down for the twisty stretch round Worcester Street, which is controlled by traffic lights to stop buses meeting on the tight bends. After a few runs, I wondered how necessary it was to slow so much and found I could save precious seconds by easing off the accelerator rather than braking for each turn; the Trident responded magnificently. For a double-decker — albeit a low one — it holds the road beautifully and I don't think we frightened any grannies. From that point onwards I felt much more confident.

Indicators, wipers, horn and washers are all on a single control to the right of the steering column, and despite having moaned about this at the launch of the Trident (*Buses* May 1999) it didn't give me a moment's bother.

Not all the controls are so user-friendly. The handbrake is well positioned to the right of the steering wheel; I suppose it's good that you can't open either door without applying it, but it's a pain when you're in a hurry. You can't open the entrance door until the bus stops. The door controls are confusing, too, four buttons in close proximity (one each to open and close each door) and well out of eyeline. With a wideish hand span, I could just reach the buttons while holding the handbrake; that saved vital nanoseconds.

Closing the exit doors is also safe but slow; when you press the button a bleeper sounds, then the door closes and the brakes release. Conversely, you can start before the front door closes. The technique is to make sure you close the centre door in time, but I never mastered the knack of simultaneously serving boarding passengers and checking the rear doors. A combination of periscope, large interior mirror, a small and useful magnifying mirror trained on the doorway itself and nearside exterior mirror were needed to be sure it was safe to close the doors. No wonder many operators have abandoned centre exits, but you need two doors on late-night shopping night when you're discharging a full load of 90 commuters and picking up another 90 shoppers at the same time.

Kneeling was easy with a large black button clearly visible. It was accompanied by an alarming hiss from under the platform and was slow, again discouraging general use though invaluable at times. Since the Tridents were introduced last June, the service has attracted four or five regular wheelchair users (we saw none on our duties), and a few pushchairs, though most car users have already folded these to go in the car. But route 300 stops at the Radcliffe Infirmary and it was there that I used the kneeling facility most. As soon as you release the handbrake, the bus springs back to normal ride height.

Already mentioned are the other confusing switches for lighting and heating; at one point I plunged both saloons into darkness when trying to switch on the cab light. Most bodywork function switches are identical and are tucked away to the right of the driver. Most warning lights also were difficult to see past the steering wheel rim, regardless of how it was adjusted. These are major irritations to a new driver, but old hands soon get used to them.

I did want more power to get away from rest. Despite the modified fuel pumps, all five Tridents I drove lumbered away from stops and were difficult to coax on to busy roundabouts. The only way on to the Wolvercote roundabout, on the ring road adjacent to Pear Tree car park, was to give the bus full throttle the moment a gap appeared, in full knowledge that by the time we got rolling another vehicle would

be coming from the right. I balked at a vehicle on each of at least a dozen entries on to the roundabout and luckily no driver reacted unfavourably; I suspect the locals are used to these monsters trundling out in front of them.

Conversely, the accessible Tridents are attracting older and less able passengers — many of whom are not used to travelling by bus, so the smooth, gentle acceleration is ideal for them. In truth I never found problems pulling into traffic from stops.

Once underway, the Trident delivers its power smoothly, quietly, without fuss and in adequate quantities, even when carrying nigh on 100 passengers — a combined load of about six or seven tonnes. On one bus, the ZF automatic seemed to change up too early, making that Trident occasionally elephantine. On one occasion, the gearbox got quite shirty when I lifted my foot from the accelerator just as it changed up; it changed down again with a bad-tempered thump.

The Cummins C-series/ZF automatic combination isn't common outside the Dennis range, and I wasn't entirely satisfied with it. The biggest problem is the engine's fast idle speed, and despite the slow acceleration from rest the bus could lurch away unexpectedly. The gearbox has a useful Neutral Bus Stop (NBS) facility which selects neutral when you apply the handbrake. Partly because of the idling speed, and partly because much of the brake pedal's travel simply controls the retarder, you have to hold the pedal hard down when releasing the handbrake; having the pedal only partially depressed causes the bus to leap into action. Closing the rear doors has the same effect when the brake interlock is released. Incidentally the NBS was more responsive than on the same gearbox in the Volvo B6BLE tested in *Buses* September.

The brakes were tricky to handle smoothly. Retarder performance was fine and decelerated steadily to about 10mph; if you weren't careful you would then overbrake when coming to a halt. The best way round this was to brake harder than usual in earlier stages of brake application, to bring in the air-actuated drum foundation brakes while still in retarder mode. I'm sure this becomes easier with familiarisation, but I ended my last service run by treating three dozen passengers to an undignified hop, skip and a jump before depositing them at Redbridge car park. Oddly, the three Tridents I had driven at the vehicle's launch were exemplary in this respect; all five Oxford ones were awkward, albeit to differing degrees.

Ride quality generally was good, if soft, and I wondered if the acceptable amount of motion felt at cab level might have been bouncier upstairs. Philip Lamb, who took the photos, found the upper deck very

Above:

The individual seats are trimmed in Oxford's own 'dreaming spires' moquette.

comfortable; 'smooth and solid' and better than an Olympian, which is praise indeed. It did nod on braking, which emphasised some of my clumsier balletics on the brake pedal. Certainly care had to be taken in bus lanes, where surfaces are erratic at road junctions, though at times the bus lanes were excellent for allowing the bus to get past stationary traffic.

Well suited to the job

You need at least double-deck capacity on Oxford Park-&-Ride. We carried full loads, especially as our second shift (10.45-20.30 on a Thursday) took in late-night shopping. Then, the half-hour end-to-end running time becomes inadequate and the timetable is shot to pieces. Indeed after our afternoon break, we had to drive non-stop from 17.00 onwards, as there was no time to pause at either end. Even so, we lost half a trip.

Larry Rogers feels the articulated buses used for a time on the service were the best solution; they held more people, the three doors sped boarding and alighting, and they overcame passengers' reluctance to ride upstairs.

My overall impression of the Dennis was of a high-quality vehicle, with a pleasing, steady performance. I had expected it to feel lightweight and cheap and cheerful, when it really feels like a thoroughbred heavyweight; even the body lacked rattles. Noise levels from the cab are very subdued and apart from a slight 'crackle' from the engine under heavy acceleration, just to remind you there aren't 10 or 11 litres banging away in the back, it had a soothing contralto murmur which eased stress on a busy day and reminded me for all the world, dare I say, of an Olympian.

Its 'could do betters' are mainly the smoothness of the braking, the reflections in the windscreen, the poor cab ergonomics and that lack of urge when you need it most, but on the whole Oxford Bus Company has a fine flagship fleet to woo the motorist. I only hope I didn't drive too many of them back to cars — other than in the most literal sense.



Above:
Easy access Tridents are attracting new custom.

Below:
Power is adequate for most of the day, but presents challenges when pulling into major roads.



Reviews

BOOKS

THE LITTLE RED BOOK 2000.

EDITED BY JOHN ALDRIDGE, IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING, 240MM X 175MM, 220pp, £29.99

The latest edition of the bus industry's most comprehensive Who's Who among operators, manufacturers and suppliers is as packed as ever with essential information for anyone connected with buses and coaches.

The trade section has been substantially revised for this year and the operator section, as usual, is packed with names, addresses, contact numbers and fleet details for operators throughout the British Isles and around Europe. British operators, regardless of whether they are small independents, major fleets within a large group or one of the 17 surviving council-owned undertakings, are listed by local authority area.

ALAN MILLAR

THE COMPLETE WORLD OF LITTLE BUSES. VOLUME 1: BRITAIN AND HONG KONG.

VIC DAVEY AND DANNY C. Y. CHAN. NORTHCORD TRANSPORT 190MM x 265MM, 258pp, £29.75

Spurred on by EFE and Corgi in this country, the hobby of collecting model buses has grown enormously in the past 10 years. These days, because the choice is so bewildering, serious collectors have been crying out for a single source of information on what has been produced.

This new book is the first in a small series which should meet that need. To say it is largely pictorial is an understatement, since it contains over 2,300 colour photographs of models from over 250 different makers. It is surprisingly up-to-date, too, with pictures of models released in mid-1999 or even later.

The series will eventually cover the world, but this one claims to deal with those produced in the UK and Hong Kong. The interpretation is far wider, including not only models of buses built or operated in those two places but also those designed by people in them, and therefore all those hundreds of models made in China. And it adds in mainly UK-style buses made in India, Portugal, Spain and Japan. The logic, no doubt, is that a Routemaster is just that, whether modelled by a Japanese or a UK manufacturer.

The book is a mine of information. Illustrations are arranged in chapters, some with overlapping subjects. In some cases, listing is by scale, but every one of Corgi's OOC range is listed, while the EFE listing is limited to just every casting variation, since the publishers have already produced a separate book on that marque.

But it is for all the other makes and models that most will appreciate the book and especially its illustrations. They are supplemented by full listings at the end of the book, though these suffer from two weaknesses. One is a small

typeface, which is also rather faintly printed. The other is the strange order for the listings: alphabetical, but by material used for the model. Thus Corgi, for example, appears a long way down the listing, because the models are made of zamac. First in the list are those makers, such as Fun-Ho of New Zealand, which use aluminium. Another strange feature is the order (where applicable) of model numbers where, for example, Corgi 449 is listed after 44703 — computer logic, perhaps?

But these are small points. The book's strength is the sheer weight of entries and pictures, for its listings include not only models made with conventional materials but even model kits and ceramics. The book may not seem cheap, but that wealth of colour pictures is costing you little more than 1p each. Recommended.

JOHN ALDRIDGE

MODELS

CORGI ORIGINAL OMNIBUS COMPANY

1/76th scale Southdown Leyland Titan PD3/Northern Counties 'Queen Mary'

The casting many have been waiting for is here at last, and nice it looks too in its first form as early 827 (TCD 827) on route 45.

Indeed, it's much better than the catalogue picture of the prototype suggested. The feel of the Queen Mary is well captured — the all-important radiator grille is nicely shaped and is chromed, with black printing to suggest the spaces between the slats. It looks good although the top isn't quite curved enough; Correctly for this early example, it does not have a Southdown badge; this will look marvellous on later examples, I'm sure.

Flush-fit glazing significantly helps the Northern Counties look. To allow variation between models of different batches, window vents are printed (and not etched) rather heavily on to the glazing in silver, so — correctly — the small amidships window has vents on both decks. The cab windscreen also benefits from flush glazing, with correct opening in silver, too, and without the deep recess found on Corgi's MCW Orion model. Windscreen wiper arms are good and are more finely detailed than ever before, proud of the screen itself to good effect.

Upper saloon front windows on this batch had gently curved outer/upper edges, but later batches had squarer tops, so the shape is right for the later ones and therefore isn't for a TCD. Window pillars are generally a shade heavy.

Detail is good, with two small slit vents above the upper saloon front windows printed on, as is a silver curvy rain gutter above the rear upper saloon emergency door. The two small circular front dash vents are present.

Single headlamps are again better than before, nicely shaped with real plastic lenses set in silvered rims; a shame these weren't chromed as the pleasing shine from the grille makes the headlamp surrounds look dull. Also, the headlamp detail makes the sidelamps — printed plain silver circles — look just that; black edging is needed perhaps.

Most books reviewed in *Buses* are available or may be ordered through the Ian Allan Bookshops at:

45/46 Lower Marsh, Waterloo, London, SE1 7SG (phone 0207 401 2100);
5 Piccadilly Station Approach, Manchester, M1 2GH (phone 0161 237 9840);
47 Stephenson Street, Birmingham, B2 4DH (phone 0121 643 2496)

All the indicator display panels are edged in silver — apart from the main rear panel, which consequently looks odd. A spelling error has given us 'Porchester' (as in the baths) rather than 'Portchester', but a note enclosed with each model suggests self-adhesive labels will follow to correct this error.

Again, it's pleasing that there are good, firm, factory-fitted mirrors that *don't* look like plastic add-ons. Most realistic, they enhance the model greatly but aren't as robust as they look, so care should be taken.

Windscreens aren't quite deep enough at the centre pillar as the sweep up from the outer corners is a touch too steep. The bottom edge of the panelling is to the correct depth for later batches of Queen Marys, so unusually on this early TCD, the bottom of the panels are painted black to suggest no panelling, with a suspended dark green guard rail below. The effect works well.

The doors are the only real weakness, with upper and lower windows set too low and with over-square windows; door detail is Tampo-printed. The kick-plate under the doors is green and should be silver. A gentle moulding either side of the doors is picked out in silver to suggest rails.

Side gold-shaded fleetnames are lovely, but are also set slightly too high and legal lettering is amazing — so tiny yet, when viewed under a magnifier, it is perfect (although I would expect weights would have been in block capitals in 1957 rather than lower case as shown). No adverts are carried.

The rear registration plate should be inset at an angle, but is printed flat on the casting. Rear light clusters are simple red and yellow blobs without edging, too.

The same wheels we've had on numerous OOCs appear again, so the front wheels don't have their chunky silver wheelnut guard rings, but thin AEC-like ones. The rear wheel centres are as on the Bristol K and L, which is sloppy as rear hubs should have Leyland twin rings — but perhaps I'm nit-picking. These details don't detract, but would enhance if attended to. The depth of the mudguards isn't picked out in dark green as it should be, making the front wings look light green when viewed head-on.

Overall, my guess is that if you've been waiting patiently for this, you'll see it, like it and want to buy it.

JOHN G. LIDSTONE

Just to remind you, this was the pre-launch illustration of the prototype Corgi Queen Mary model, as shown in our December issue. John Lidstone insists that the real thing looks much better.



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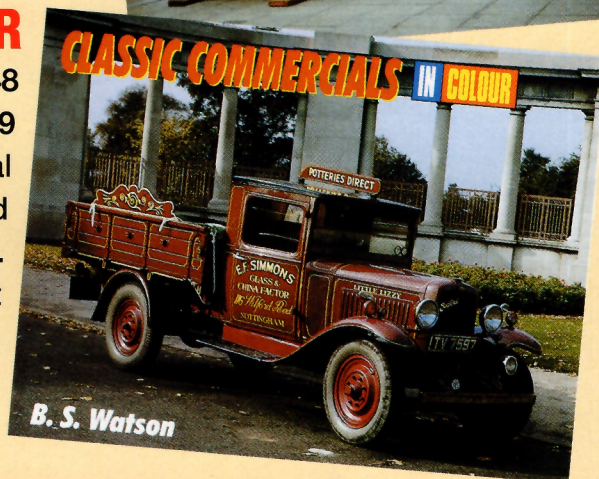
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PICTUR

WELL LIT BY STREET

CHRIS MORRISON has been out in the centres of three urban areas with his tripod and camera to capture the images of buses after dark. Should you wish to emulate his style, he tells us that they were all taken on Kodachrome 200 film at exposures of between two and five seconds at f5.6.



Above:
Nottingham 412 (T412 BNN), a Dennis Trident with East Lancs Lolyne body, shows just how much bright light is available inside modern city buses.



Above:
Christmas lights twinkle delicately above Nottingham City Transport's 281 (V281 DRC), an Optare Solo, and 502 (L502 OAL), an Alexander-bodied Dennis Dart.

Below:
Tungsten lights glow from within Reading Mainline Routemaster 11 (AST 416A) while it stands outside the town's railway station.



EVIEW

LIGHT



Above:
Lighting from buildings and bus reflect on the surface of Bull Street, Birmingham beneath Travel West Midlands 6006 (T606 MOA), an articulated Mercedes-Benz O.405GN.

Left:
Contrasting with his sunny photograph of the same bus in last month's issue, Chris Morrison met up again with Travel West Midlands 4034 (Y34 MOA), one of its first Volvo B7Ls with Plaxton President body, in Birmingham's Corporation Street.

KING ALFRED- INTO



The great beauty of the Friends of King Alfred Buses' annual running day based on Winchester is that there are so many facets to it. If you stand in Winchester Broadway, with crowds of enthusiasts milling about and just watch the buses coming and going, there is a festive sort of atmosphere which might be had at any other rally. Yet there are little moments — and they can, and do, occur in the Broadway as well as elsewhere — when you find yourself transported back 30 or more years. It's those little moments that make this such a special event, unlike any other. I remember some years ago standing in the Broadway chatting with someone, with my back to the buses and just hearing a Lodekka arriving. Surely this was the late-1960s, and this was a Hants & Dorset bus arriving from Southampton on the 47.

This year, walking along Jewry Street from the station, early on a damp, soggy January morning, the street was deserted save for a green Leyland Panther waiting patiently at the bus stop by the library, headlights reflected in the damp road surface. As I walked along the road, getting ever damper, another Panther roared by; no modern cars had intervened, there was nothing to tell me this wasn't the early-1970s — yet here I was in the next millennium. To me, snatched moments like this are the very essence of bus preservation. These moments can't be manufactured; try too hard and the very 'ordinariness' of them is whisked away. Even at the FoKAB event they are rare and precious; but they are always there to be had. And that's what keeps me going back.

The event has grown and grown over the years, and now the King Alfred buses, which once provided an unbelievably comprehensive local service for the good people of the one-time capital of Wessex, are supplemented by others from elsewhere. This year for the first time I wondered whether the very essence of the event is in danger of being swamped by stretching the principle of letting the odd 'outside' vehicle appear 'on hire'; authenticity has always been a keynote of the event. This year, with large crowds to carry and a few misfortunes with FoKAB's own vehicles (my own personal love affair with Panther 419 was tainted this year by a two-hour drive in heavy rain with no windscreen wipers!) we had to excuse a few 'guest appearances'.

It was a grey, gloomy, wet day — ironic, because 1 January, from which it had been moved to avoid the effects of the millennium celebrations, had been a perfect day down there. Its revised date, 3 January, also saw other operators running normal services so we didn't see so many 'real' passengers using the services for transport into town. But as ever it was a successful day, enjoyed by thousands of bus enthusiasts from far and wide.



Above left:
That tranquil moment in Jewry Street, Winchester, with Panther UOU 417H waiting patiently.
STEPHEN MORRIS

Above right
A blessed Tiger Cub. WCG 104 celebrated its 40th birthday in October and was treated to a repaint. It was blessed by the Dean of Winchester, the Very Rev Michael Till, while the Mayor of Winchester, Dr Alan Mitchell, Mrs Mitchell and FoKAB chairman Brian Goldsmith look on. It was later blessed again by Stephen Morris, who did not get on very well with the Leyland four-speed crash gearbox with which it has recently been fitted; more authentic it may be than the rather nice five-speed Albion which was in there before, but it's a bit of stinker.
STEPHEN MORRIS

Above:
Leyland Panther UOU 417H again, this time out in Stanmore.
PHILIP LAMB

STEPHEN MORRIS reflects on the annual King Alfred event in Winchester

ITS SECOND MILLENNIUM!

Below:
One less than usual visitor was this Thurgood-bodied Dennis Lancel, now owned by Rexquote.
PHILIP LAMB



Left:
Out of town; King Alfred Bedford SB/Harrington Crusader 326 CAA sets off to turn round in Stockbridge. Our impressions of this vehicle appear in *Preserved Bus 12*, on sale on 18 February.
PHILIP LAMB



Above:
Bristol connection. Bristol Greyhound Bristol MW BHU 92C makes a connection in Stockbridge on its way from Bristol on an Associated Motorways service.
PHILIP LAMB

Preservation UPDATE

CHRISTMAS SUCCESS AT KEIGHLEY

More than 500 passengers used the Keighley Bus Museum Trust's free bus services on Christmas Day. This is the fifth year running that KBMT has provided bus services on Christmas Day, and 1999's service was used by more passengers than ever before, with an increase of 25% over 1998.

KBMT provided most areas of Keighley with an hourly service from 11.00 to 17.00 on Christmas Day, and 10 routes ran out to areas including Oxenhope, Braithwaite, Thwaites Brow, Airedale Hospital and Sutton. They form 'a genuine service for people who cannot, or do not wish to, use cars or taxis', said David Hudson, KBMT's chairman. Six vehicles were used; they were Bolton Crossley single-decker No8, Royal Blue Bristol L6A 1228, Halifax Leyland Leopard 232, Bradford PD3A 309, West Yorkshire Bristol RELL 1403 and Yorkshire Woollen Leyland Atlantean 773.

SOMEONE LOVES A MERLIN . . .

A Daimler Merlin Swift Scania Association has been proposed to cater for owners and enthusiasts of London Transport's 'unloved generation' DM/DMS, MB/MBA/MBS, MD/MS, SM/SMD/SMS and XF-class rear-engined buses.

The DMSSA would provide communication and disseminate information between vehicle owners on technical matters, sourcing of spare parts and surviving vehicles and would raise the profile of these vehicles in the world of London bus preservation.

Those interested in the proposed association should contact Eddie Knorn at Green Low Cottage, Royston Road, Melbourn, near Royston SG8 6DG, tel: 01763 266002 (evenings only), Email: leylandfleetline@hotmail.com

DON'T FORGET . . .

Our annual Rally Calendar & Museum Guide will appear next month, in our March issue, not in April as in previous years. As ever our unique guide gives full details of the 2000 rally season and of bus museums, and appears a month early following requests from readers. The new publication date for this popular supplement reflects the lengthening of the rally season in recent times and will enable vehicle owners to plan their rally attendance for the season more easily.

WANTED IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The Stroud Vintage Transport & Engine Club is actively seeking new members to take the organisation into the new millennium.

The club holds an annual rally in Miserden Park in Gloucestershire and has monthly meetings, with talks, film shows and exhibitions on varying aspects of the heritage movement, with a strong bias towards the preservation of vintage commercial vehicles and PSVs. It organises visits and other activities in the summer. Details from Matt Shipton, 'Invicta', 12 The Lawns, High Street, Stonehouse, Glos GL10 2NU.

TO THE DOME IN STYLE WITH A 'Y'



Above:
The roomy, ice blue interior of one of the Millennium DAFs.

Below:
Bus 2002 (V2 GMT) on the Millennium Busway, just short of the Dome. Internally, these buses are numbered MD1-17, but externally are 2001-17 with cherished numbers for Greenwich Mean Time.

If John Prescott's dream comes true and the humble bus sheds its workhorse image for one of a sleek racehorse, the process might begin at the Millennium Dome.

For although the national media coverage of the Dome may be all about the queues, the cost of the project and the attractiveness — or otherwise — of the contents of the controversial structure, it should also be about public transport.

For you can't put what potentially will be the country's biggest visitor attraction into a site well into the south-easternmost corner of Greater London — significantly far away from the national motorway network — and not expect public transport to play a big part in delivering visitors without causing undue traffic congestion.

So you hope and keep your fingers crossed firmly that the new Jubilee Underground extension — a big reason for putting the Dome in Greenwich rather than Birmingham, Manchester or somewhere else closer to the heart of the whole country — will be open on time and that it won't go

London Central's East Lancs Millennium DAFs could be the highest profile buses at the start of this new century.

ALAN MILLAR tells the story of the buses that shuttle to the Greenwich Dome

into meltdown. You send the Prime Minister down the Tube, complete with press corps and non-communicating fellow passengers just to remind people there's an alternative to the car.

And you lay on a bus route. Two, in fact. To supplement the direct Underground link to North Greenwich, and perhaps to have a back-up in times of technical trouble, London Transport Buses has devised the Millennium Transit as a dedicated feeder shuttle from two Connex South Eastern surface rail stations in the area, the M1 from Charlton and the M2 from Greenwich. They are expected to carry around 2,000 people a day, Londoners mainly and others living in the south-east rather more than visitors from farther afield, but they are intended as showpieces for the future of the London bus network as a whole.



High standards for a high profile

So instead of being either Hoppa-branded midibuses, low-floor double-deckers or, indeed, double-deckers of any sort, the Millennium Transits are sleek, 12m, full-width single-deckers bristling with technical features that befit the highest profile bus service at the dawn of the 21st century. As visitors to the Coach & Bus 99 show at the National Exhibition Centre were reminded, they are DAF SB220s with East Lancs Millennium bodies — a new European-style design developed specifically for these 17 buses.

The peak requirement is for seven buses on each route, but peak Dome times include 23.00 on summer weekends and during school holidays when the M1 will operate every five minutes.

'LT Buses wants this to be a showcase, the best that the industry can offer,' says Andrew Wickham, service quality director for London General, the Go-Ahead Group subsidiary which will run the 17 buses for at least 13 months, possibly for longer if the Dome remains open after 31 January 2001. 'That applies to both services, to the vehicles, the staff and the infrastructure.'

London Central won the M1/M2 contract in the normal tendering process. Like any new or substantially altered route, it was awarded on a gross contract basis with LT Buses, rather than the operator, bearing the commercial risk — although, these days, LT seems reluctant to award contracts for even the best performing routes on anything other than gross cost terms.

It's a fair guess that this contract was more hotly contested than many, but even so, the number of bidders could probably still have been counted on the fingers of one hand. Apart from Stagecoach Selkent, London Central was geographically the best placed major red bus operator to run the services, and is basing the DAFs at its garage at New Cross.

The contract was awarded in the summer of 1998 on the basis that there should be a good level of passenger information, that modern stylish vehicles with innovative features would be used and that consideration would be given to the use of alternative fuel sources to diesel. London Central's bid offered LT Buses a choice of either liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) or compressed natural gas (CNG) and the decision to take up the LPG option, which offers quicker and cheaper refuelling, began to narrow the choice of vehicles.

Only DAF Bus currently offers a production line LPG option, so there was little choice but to go for the SB220 as three of the 17 buses — two for route M1 and one for the M2 — are gas-fuelled.

The 12m length, hardly ever a popular one in London, and the 2.55m width were determined more by passenger capacity. As Andrew Wickham explains, that ruled



out an alternative of the slightly shorter Super Pointer Dart. 'We felt that would have crammed them in too much. Our strongly held view is to go for fewer seats and a more generous pitch.'

So the DAFs have just 33 seats — or 30 and a wheelchair — plus standing room for another 33 in a two-door body with flat floors and a two-step rise into the rear section. Seating capacity was limited by putting the 13 diesel buses' fuel tanks into the enlarged offside front wheelarch, with the side-effect of some larger-than-normal buggy racks. While the gas buses have roof-mounted cylinders, it made sense for them also to have the large wheelarch boxes rather than complicate matters by squeezing in an extra two seats.

Why East Lancs won the body order

East Lancs won the body contract largely because it was willing to provide a new product rather than something already in production. Neither London Central nor sister company London General had much experience with East Lancs products, save for General's Red Arrow National Greenways and a small batch of step-entrance Dennis Darts with Central — and both purchases predate Go-Ahead's move into London.

But the bodybuilder's adoption of Alusuisse bolted aluminium construction has provided London Central with confidence it might previously have lacked in the quality of bodies coming out of Blackburn. That confidence is bolstered by the decision of sister companies Go North East and Brighton & Hove to buy East Lancs-bodied Dennis Tridents.

London Central, in fact, had a lot of input into the design of the Millennium body, consulting closely with designer John Worker as he turned the initial brief into something LT Buses hopes will also turn heads. The operator's input was mainly to ensure that engineering and maintenance needs were borne in mind, while an

important issue for East Lancs was to avoid visible fixings like screws and rivets.

Apart from their low emission engines, kneeling facility, centre doors and ramps, which are more or less obligatory these days — and their length — the Millennium Transit buses have four major differences from the normal London Central specification. These are Bright Tech front, side and rear Powerblinds, a Hanover dot matrix passenger information system inside the buses giving audio and visual information about the vehicles and services as well as 'next stop' details, a Clayton heating and air conditioning system, and Formflex cantilever seats chosen for their smart appearance and to make the buses easier to clean.

Indeed, a much more intensive cleaning regime will be operated on these routes than on normal London Central services. Drivers are expected to sweep out their bus after each return trip and buses will be mopped out nightly at New Cross.

The 46 drivers and three supervisors employed on the services have been selected from around 100 applicants working at all four London Central sites. Many are having to move garages for the duration of the contract and all were selected for their personal performance. Even so, all were being put through an intensive training programme in the week before Christmas, with Equus — the company responsible, among other things, for Trent's Rainbow service training programmes — providing a customer care session, while they were also given disability awareness training and enhanced route and vehicle familiarisation training.

Above:
Two generations meet: gas-fuelled 2010 and a Routemaster in the yard at New Cross garage.

The crews are all kitted out in a new design of Allen & Douglas uniform with tie and aubergine-coloured jacket. These might turn out to be the prototypes for a new Go-Ahead uniform in London.

Millennium Transit drivers may also work overtime on other London Central routes, but the M1 and M2 will be their main jobs. And this isn't just like any airport shuttle or car park contract, for passengers will pay with cash (and expect change) or present Travelcards and Millennium Cards which provide pre-booked access to the Dome.

The Millennium Busway

Another fundamental difference from the rest of the network is that the M1 includes the Millennium Busway, 1.3km of electronic guided busway between the Dome and Bugsby's Way — about halfway to Charlton. Nine of the buses — two LPG and seven diesels — are equipped with Alstom electronic guidance to provide this service with none of the visible features like kerbs and guidewheels that you find on the Leeds and Ipswich guided bus systems.

There are just two low voltage wires buried under the surface of the crazy-paved surface to keep each bus running exactly along the centre point between the wires, and to ensure that they line up perfectly with the platforms at the Millennium Village intermediate halt on the busway. When running in guided mode, the steering stiffens up to prevent drivers from turning the buses off course.

Because of the intensive level of testing being demanded by the Railway Inspectorate and the Vehicle Inspectorate, the guideway isn't expected to be in operation before early February, although it is complete and empty buses have been running on it to test its performance at different loads and speeds, and to establish if the turning circles at Charlton are adequate.

Away from the Millennium Busway, both routes benefit from lengthy new stretches of bus lanes, and there are transponder-actuated traffic signals on and off the busway.

So what is the long-term plan for the 17 buses? If the Dome remains open for more than the first 13 months, LT Buses has an option to extend the contract with London Central. It's also possible that they could operate instead of or as well as guided articulated trolleybuses on the proposed Waterfront Transit connecting Greenwich and Woolwich with new housing developments at Thamesmead.

But apart from a few outer

suburban routes, there aren't many parts of London where experience shows a 12m bus would fit happily, and especially one with no more seats than a more manoeuvrable Dennis Dart.

But Go-Ahead has been here before. The 11.5m Volvo B10Bs run briefly by London General on the Clapham Omnibus-branded 88 were moved to Oxford and if the DAFs aren't wanted there, there is a fair chance that they could go to Brighton & Hove, Go North East

(which has gas and diesel SB220s) or GHL, the airport services subsidiary. Or they could be sold. The Traction Group has ordered several similar buses for various routes in Yorkshire.

All that, however, lies in the future. Until at least the end of January next year these 17 distinctive buses will be rolling right up to the turnstiles of one of the most talked about venues in Britain. And they might start exciting people once again about buses. Let's hope that they do.



Left:
2014 (V14 GMT), one of the buses with electronic guidance equipment, on test at Millennium Village halt.

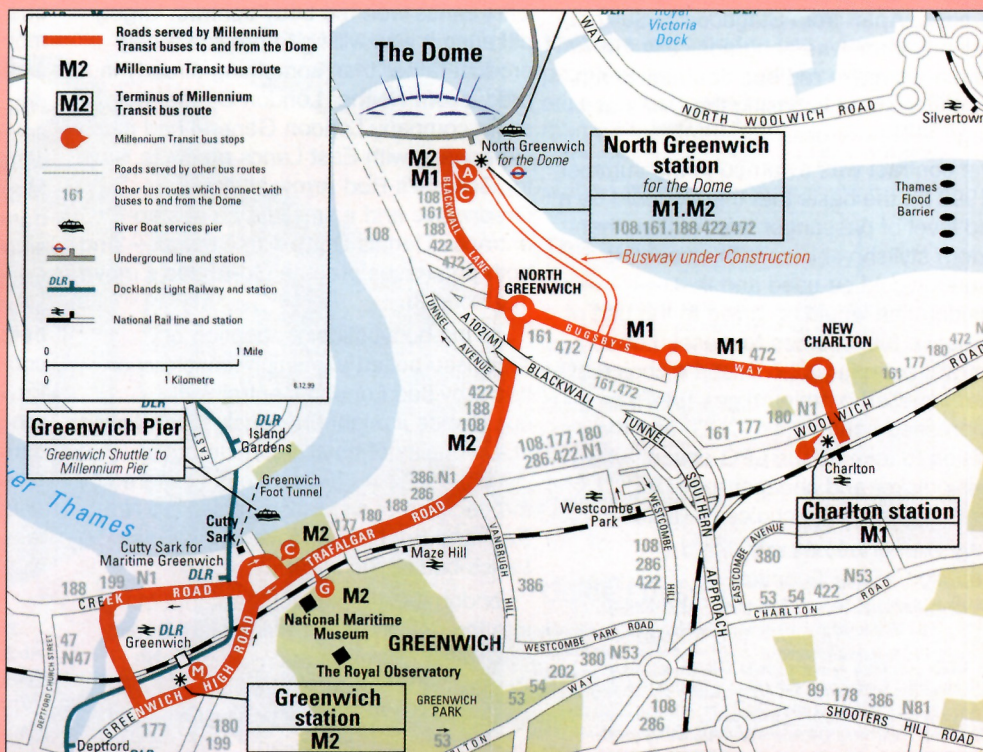


THE WHERE AND WHEN

Both routes run every 10 minutes, seven days a week, with the first departures from Charlton (M1) and Greenwich (M2) at 05.30 and the last on both routes from the Dome at 00.40. Frequency of the M1 increases to every five minutes at busy times.

Journey time on the largely segregated M1 is 10 minutes. On the M2, which runs through Greenwich town centre and calls at the Cutty Sark sailing ship, it is approximately 15 minutes.

Seven buses work each route at peak times, with generous recovery time built into the M2 schedule.



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Ian Allan
PUBLISHING

Rural revival in Dorset

Sir,

The article (*Buses* August) highlighted two key routes improved with rural bus grant. The latest Dorset timetables show more than 20 routes supported in whole or in part.

Lyme Regis has benefited from the improved service 31, but there still are drawbacks. The last bus from Weymouth on weekdays reaches Lyme Regis at 19.21, returning from Axminster at 20.25, having connected with the 17.30 (except Saturdays) train from London Waterloo. Anyone wanting to return from Bridport or Axminster later than this has to get a taxi or rely on private transport. Interestingly, on Sundays, the two-hourly service runs until 20.12 ex-Axminster and a later bus from Weymouth terminates at Lyme Regis at 22.32, and then returns to Weymouth.

Although the 31/X31 has run in two sections for many years, it was seen as a Taunton-Axminster-Bridport-(Weymouth) service, with a 10-minute connection at Axminster. Travelling to Taunton, this is now 26 minutes. The extra 16 minutes' layover time at Axminster has helped the reliability of the Dorset section of the route.

The X53 Exeter-Seaton-Lyme Regis-Dorchester service (a joint Dorset/Devon initiative) has given a much improved service, but has led to the withdrawal of the Tuesday and Saturday 896 shoppers' service from Lyme Regis to Exeter provided by Swards Coaches; but Devon is supporting a morning connecting bus from Colyton to Seaton run by Axe Valley as a partial replacement.

It is natural to highlight the positive aspects of changes, but for certain journeys there can be adverse effects. That said, no bus timetable can suit all the people all the time.

Philip Sankey,
Lyme Regis

Don't panic, Captain Mainwaring . . . but where's the bus?

Sir,

I wonder if readers could help a *Dad's Army* enthusiast track down the whereabouts of a Morris bus, registered DX 9547 which appeared in the episode 'Everybody's Trucking'?

The actor Felix Bowness (of *Hi-Di-Hi!* fame) was the driver in this particular sketch and the passengers were a group of pensioners on their annual trip. Readers may recall one particular funny moment when the pensioners disembark and start dancing to the music from the *Calliope* that was being towed by a steamroller.

Dad's Army was filmed on location in the Thetford/Stamford area of Suffolk, so this may be where the bus is likely to be found, but wherever it is, I'd love to see it close up so I can take some photos and maybe, if possible, go for a run. My phone number is 01256 356869.

Iain S. Wilson,
28 Ludlow Close,
Basingstoke,
Hants, RG23 8QW

Muddled messages about monopolies

Sir,

Your editorial comments (*Buses* December) on the Office of Fair Trading were apt and timely. This was brought home to me when looking through the 1999 index. I was reminded that the OFT told Arriva to sell Lutonian in six months, but a year later it has not done so.

First Bristol seeks a similar monopoly, undeterred by the OFT's edicts. It seems that the large bus groups can indulge in naked, unbridled competition to gain local monopolies, but if they cooperate to the passengers' advantage then intervention is immediate.

You tell us that you do not want to return to whole swathes of the country being held to ransom by monopolistic bus giants, but the fact is that we have. FirstGroup, by buying Cawlett Group, has gained a monopoly of all the country south and west of a line from Bristol to Weymouth, apart from isolated pockets of resistance at Plymouth and around Torbay. This is almost identical to Tilling's West Country monopoly.

Stagecoach monopolises most of south central and south-east England, as did BET before it. The only difference is that what was Hants & Dorset has come in and what was Maidstone & District has stayed out.

Transport policy should be determined by politicians who remember what the world outside London is like and not by London-based civil servants or City of London financiers.

Terence de Freyne-Martin,
Bideford, Devon

The one major difference from the old regime is that deregulation — in theory at least — creates an opportunity for independent operators to compete with the major groups, and especially to tender to provide non-commercial bus services. In that sense, the big groups do not enjoy a monopoly, just dominance of the geographical areas mentioned by Mr de Freyne-Martin. — Ed.

Argyll and Bute: another view

Sir,

In his *On the Map* article in November, Barry Doe suggests that Argyll & Bute Council 'soon discovered that Strathclyde PTE could not do effective publicity for its own area' and 'would certainly do nothing for Argyll', so had decided to take back its own affairs. This is incorrect.

For 18 months after local government reorganisation in Scotland in April 1996, Argyll & Bute used Strathclyde PTE as its agent in the part of its area that lie beyond the statutory boundary of the passenger transport authority. But its decision to undertake this work in house from 1997 onwards had nothing to do with the quality of public transport information produced by the PTE.

I must also take issue with the statement that the PTE cannot do effective publicity for its own area. I am well aware of the difficulties, but this statement should be seen in the context of the number of changes to registered local bus services which have taken place over the past 13 years since deregulation. This has tailed off from a peak of eight changes per working day in the late-1980s to the current rate of five per working day. In effect, there have been 20,000 changes to bus services in the PTE area since deregulation. Perhaps Mr Doe has a cost-effective answer to the problem of producing effective publicity given these excesses of deregulation; this issue is one of the reasons why the passenger transport authority is currently pressing for a measure of re-regulation of the bus industry.

However, the really serious issue with Mr Doe's comments is his subsequent implication that Argyll & Bute now has timetable booklets which the PTE previously did not produce. This also is incorrect, since the PTE started production of area timetable guides six or seven years ago. This was comparatively easy to do, as about 90% of the bus network was subsidised and therefore under the PTE's control, while ferry and rail services were subject to only two timetable changes per year. Argyll & Bute is to be congratulated for reintroducing these booklets after a brief absence.

What makes Mr Doe's comments even more worrying is the fact that he was made aware of these facts by Argyll & Bute Council in December 1998 when he was advised in writing that 'the area timetable guides were inherited from SPT' and that 'SPT used to revise each guide twice a year'. SPT certainly did so until September 1997 when the responsibility for doing so passed to the council.

That Mr Doe fails to report matters on a factually correct basis is bad enough, but when he apparently deliberately distorts facts given to him in order to criticise, it is surely completely unacceptable and may suggest a lack of objectivity.

Tom Harris,
Chief public relations and marketing officer,
Strathclyde Passenger Transport,
Glasgow

Barry Doe replies:

Strathclyde is Britain's poorest PTE for publicity. Its maps do not show operators' names and, as Greater Manchester, South and West Yorkshire, Merseyside etc all have many registrations, yet produce comprehensive publicity, why shouldn't Strathclyde? Argyll did indeed inherit timetables from SPT, but has now improved on them, and SPT never had a map for the area.

In defence of London United and M1166

Sir,
In his December 'Service Extra' article, I think Julian Osborne was very harsh in his comments about London United, especially about its Metrobuses.

I would be one of the first to admit that its Metrobuses are not the best, but it is totally unreasonable to expect nigh on 20-year-old buses to look as good as they were new; indeed many vehicles in London — such as Leyland Titans and Nationals — are in a much worse state.

Recently, I had a very unpleasant experience on a Tellings-Golden Miller bus from the company's Hounslow depot on route H28; the bus was dirty, the fleetnames were tacky and it displayed information from when it was owned by London & Country. It is worth noting that the bus was a four-year-old East Lancs-bodied Dennis. London United makes every effort that it can to keep its vehicles as well as it can, and as most Metrobuses are being replaced by new buses at the moment, a few more weeks of service is hardly likely to mean that all of the buses are going to be repainted and overhauled just in time to be decommissioned.

All of the drivers I know at London United are much more friendly and courteous than many other companies. One time when an Arriva bus was two hours late, I attempted to complain and was passed from place to place. A short summary of my phone calls being three to various depots, two to regional offices, four to Arriva's national headquarters and two to London Transport; all told, this took four hours before I gave up.

London United, on the other hand, sent me a written apology when a bus was under 10 minutes late and what did I do to make them do this? I simply phoned the local garage and the apology arrived the next day. How is that for customer service?

Julian Osborne describes M1166 as being 'an interesting assortment of shades of faded pre-privatisation red, a full set of dented and scuffed panels, two light-shaped holes in the lower dash panel, ingrained filth on the engine compartment'. Are we talking about the same bus? While travelling on one of Metroline's new Tridents, we were easily outpaced by M1166 which, I might add, had no filth, holes or screeching brakes.

So I think he should come back and spend a little more time with London United and see that it is not all that bad. I hope he could find something nice to say about London United's Metrobuses (especially M1166), about its staff, route 111 and the 555/6/7 group of services — especially about each of the five, without them being in the same comment. And my greatest challenge of all is to see if he can write an entire page of good things about London United.

**Peter Blake,
Isleworth**

The Kenton bus bay

Sir,
Regarding E. W. Hardy's photo of the bus bay in Kenton ('Millar's Tales' November *Buses*), one can see in the distance the entrance to Kenton station on the Bakerloo line which is where the original bus bay is located. It gave a proper interchange from rail to bus.

Then along came Sainsbury's with the idea of using the railway coal yard sidings area to build a superstore, but only if the road bridge was increased in width along with the approaches and if traffic lights were installed for the store's car park. All five bus stops were temporary during this work and were moved about as the contractors required the spaces. The local paper revealed that Sainsbury's would contribute towards such items as bus bays and road markings.

The whole project was complicated because one side of Kenton Road is in Harrow and the side shown in the photo is in Brent. The station bus bay was used for contractors' equipment and a notice informed rail passengers that a temporary bus stop was farther along the road (out of sight). Unfortunately, the sign was placed outside a large motorcycle showroom whose staff were used to wheeling out a large number of bikes into the road as free showroom space, and moving the bus stop sign as required by them.

When construction work had finished, the four other bus bays were reinstated but not the one shown in the photo. The motorcycle problem was resolved, only for space to be occupied by CRABS (cars resting at bus stops). So without yellow lines, the bus stops were still temporary so travellers assumed the station bus stop would be restored, but your photo proves that the fight is lost. However, Kenton bus stops are all filled with cars at any time of day, so yellow paint and low-floor buses are of no value to us, the travelling public.

My memories are of the late-1920s when Kenton station was the only bus stop in Kenton Road for the 183 General, often so overloaded on its way to Harrow that the rear tyres were smoking from contact with the bodywork.

**Jack W. Bayliss,
Pinner**

LoBus: not radical enough?

Sir,
I read with interest the article entitled 'Bus & Coach Design: The Future' in your November 1999 issue.

As a product design graduate and a bus driver for the past five years (no jobs for non-experienced designers, you see), I came up with a few observations of my own which I hope may be of interest.

I envisage a set-up similar to that devised by Eric Woodcock in terms of wheels etc, but I have quite different ideas in terms of propulsion. I have furnished my vehicle with a central driving position which would, in ideal circumstances, enable the vehicle to be easily adapted for use abroad. The vehicle also uses a small gas turbine connected to a generator and to a small motor in each wheel to drive the bus. Gas turbines are run at a consistent speed which would ease the problems of noise, vibration and harshness; they are very clean running and can run on a variety of fuels, e.g. alcohol and methane, all from sustainable resources.

The turbines can utilise ceramic blades, enabling them to run at higher (and more efficient) temperatures. Also, the motors in the wheels can be utilised as brakes (reverse the torque in the system). The daily checks are accessed by a hinged panel at the front of the wheels. There is also an LED screen on the back of the vehicle which would be able to display a variety of messages — e.g. 'Bus Stopping', 'Thank you for giving way' — or rolling advertisements.

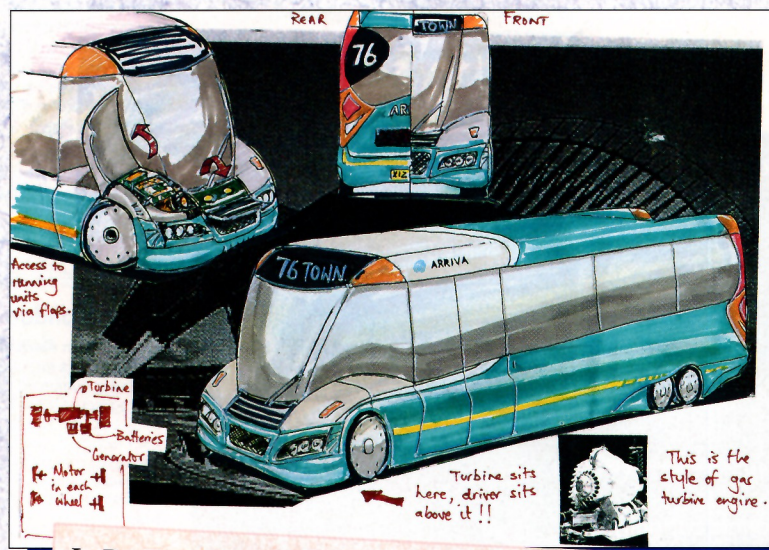
As for the aesthetics of the vehicle, they came about as a result of the nature of the packaging. Personally, I like the look of it, although I can imagine many enthusiasts crying into their beer by now. As for manufacturers, well I suppose Volvo would be the first thought owing to its research into gas turbine vehicles — does anybody recall the ECC gas turbine concept car?

Anyway, this is my interpretation of the future. It's not as far fetched as it may first appear and the industry will have to be progressive in order to keep increasing its patronage — although the excellent Wright Eclipse and Solar bodies are a step in the right direction.

And if anyone out there has a job for a product design graduate with public transport experience, I'm your man . . .

**Darren Byrne,
Rhyll**

Great minds and all that. Darren Byrne's letter and drawing reminded us of Volvo's 1995 Environmental Concept Bus (ECB) which also had a centre driving position. On the ECB, a roof-mounted ethanol-fuelled gas turbine generator powered an electric motor in its rear axle. — Ed.



LoBus is not so hot

Sir,
I have been interested in buses since the early 1930s when in Colwyn Bay and Llandudno the Royal Blue company ran BMMO SOS 35-seaters, but I am afraid I see several things wrong with the proposed LoBus in your November issue.

First, its looks would not tempt me to get out of my car — if I had one. It looks awful. Then there is the length and increased wheelbase. It wouldn't get round several of the corners on my bus route on which Optare Deltas and Excels have difficulty with their relatively short wheelbases.

The Excels have a kneeling process and it is fairly easy for the driver to place the entrance close to the kerb, even with cars near, but it would be impossible with the LoBus with the entrance being so far back.

Apart from the front-wheel-drive with all the mechanical parts over the two wheels, which will have a lot of problems, there is the fact that the driver will not be able to see passengers enter, and if they pay by whichever way is intended. From the passengers' point of view, it is nice to greet and be greeted by the driver. How he or she will control a busload of unruly children I do not know.

Sorry, to me it's not the answer to bring people out of their cars.

**S. Roye Ellis,
Marton, Blackpool**

A1 Buses, Northampton

Local service A38 (Drapery-Nene College) is being worked by D750 TCK and D105 TTTJ, ex-Warrington Dodge S56/Northern Counties B22F.

Abus, Brislington

New here is DAF DB250RSLF/Alexander ALX400 H45/24F V444 AJP. Presumably this is the vehicle previously recorded as V653 LWT.

Ambermile Group, Honley

Additions to K-Line/Taylor fleets — before the recent sale of the group to Arriva Yorkshire — comprise: Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2RP/Plaxton Paramount 3200 III C47F E267 KEF from Arriva Durham County; Dennis Dart 9SDL3002/Duple Dartline B39F G140 GOL, 9SDL3002/Carlyle Dartline B39F H878 LOX and 9SDL3017/Plaxton Pointer B43F K601 KWR, all from Jaronda, Cawood; and DAF SB220LC/Ikarus Citibus DP42F J802 KHD from Capital Logistics. SB220LT/Ikarus Citibus DP42F 5 (J805 YHD) was transferred to the Headlight fleet, along with DAF PIL 9729 (J53 GCP).

The ex-Jaronda vehicles and ex-Arriva Yorkshire Optare MetroRider J716 CUM operated without fleetnames.

DAF SB220/Optare Delta H512 YCX had the five rear rows of high-back seating replaced by low-back bus seats.

Anstey Busline, Anstey

Secondhand purchases are Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR/Northern Counties H40/30F 1 (XRR 298S) ex-Garratt, Syston and similar 2-4 (GTO 299, 49, 305V) ex-Arriva Fox County, DAF MB200/Van Hool Alizée C53F 5 (LJI 8156, B310 CRP) from Fox County and Volvo B10M-61/Jonckheere Jubilee P599 C51F 6 (E219 GNV) from First Leicester. Double-deckers are smartly presented with polished wheeltrims and appear on schools work to Wreake Valley College.

Applebys, Conisholme

New Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B33F V464 YVL operates from Horncastle and on InterConnect service 6J (Spilsby-Kirkstead).

Leyland Atlantean AN68B/1R/Roe H43/30F AUP 368W and AN68A/2R/Alexander DPH45/33F EJR 124W are ex-Go-Coastline; EJR ran briefly in red/cream.

Secondhand Leyland Nationals are Gardner-engined LMA 414T ex-Mainline, DAF-engined MIL 5580/2, 6680, 7612 (ROK 468M, TOE 486/99/5N) and OOX 811R from Arriva North West and National 2 BVP 861V from Stagecoach Midland Red. BVP is at North Somercotes along with similar BVP 817V recently transferred from Bridlington, while accident-damaged BVP 818V has been scrapped.

Arriva Croydon & North Surrey/Guildford & West Surrey AA

Fleet strength has halved here since July 1998, with an active fleet of only 191 following the recent transfer of Croydon depot's work to Arriva London South, 40 vehicles to Tellings-Golden Miller and London United and the end of operations at Leatherhead, Hounslow and Fulwell.

Arriva Cymru AA

Two further vehicles acquired from Williams, Deiniolen are Mercedes-Benz 811D/Dormobile B33F MMM842 (K542 OGA) and Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F DVG148 (DWY 148T), although the VR is thought not to have operated for Arriva, being sold to Alpine, Llandudno.

Now withdrawn are Leyland Nationals SNL49, 131 (C49 OCM, B131 SED) and Leyland Lynxes SLG299, 711 (E299 OMG, D711 SKB).

Arriva East Herts & Essex AA

Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F 2190/1 (R190/1 GNM) have been transferred from The Shires.

The latest ex-London MCW Metrobus/H43/28D are 5253/5 (B283, 155 WUL), taking the total to 13 — 5250-3/5 and 5348/63/7/70 in Arriva red/cream at Ware and 5349/53/62/8 at Grays; 5349/53 are in Arriva aquamarine, 5362 (on loan to Garston for schools work) in allover red and 5368 in London red with Cowie yellow stripes.

Arriva Fox County AA

I am grateful to the PSV Circle's Ron Maybray for a summary of news items.

New some time ago but not previously recorded is DAF SB3000/Van Hool coach 209 (T209 XVO).

Inter-group transfers comprise National Greenway B41F 2141 (SIB 6707, JCK 850W) from Durham County and Volvo B10M-50/Alexander RV H47/29D 4654/5 (F114/1 TML) from Kent Thameside. 4654 has had its centre door removed.

Further to the September issue, Leyland Olympians 4521-5/9-33 (G521-5 WJF, G506/8/9/12/3 SFT) went to North West in exchange for the Scania N113s listed in the December issue.

Disposals are of Leyland Tiger 28 (BPR 108Y) to Gerratt, Birstall; MCW Metrobuses 2453/67/79/80 (JHE 153W etc) to Kingsley, Birtley.

Arriva London AA

The 64 10.2m Alexander ALX400 H43/21D-bodied DAF DB250RS LFs for routes 59, 68/468/N68/X68 and 417 are being numbered DLA126-89, of which DLA126-40 are registered V326/7 DGT, V628 LGC, V329-32 DGT, V633 LGC, V334-9 DGT and V640 LGC. As reported in last month's 'In London', their forward-mounted staircases give them four more seats downstairs. The two outstanding 10.5m DB250RS LF/Plaxton President H45/19D, DLP11/8 (T211/8 XBV), have also been delivered.

Further Alexander-bodied Dennis Darts for London South's route 407 and London North's 444 are ADL2-23 (V602-23 LGC).

The 57 vehicles transferred from Croydon & North Surrey along with London Transport contracts and the Croydon depot were:

Volvo B10M-50/East Lancs H49/39F 611 (G611 BPH), now L611;

Volvo Olympian/East Lancs H44/30F 694-704 (M694-704 HPF), now L694-704;

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton B31F 430/1/4-6/8 (L430/1/4-6 CPJ, P438 HKN), now MD430 etc;

Optare MetroRider MR17/B29F 440-3 and MR472 (M440-3 HPF, P472 APJ) now MRL440 etc;

Dennis Lance/East Lancs B49F LS10-19 (N210-9 TPK), now DL10-19;

Dennis Dart 9SDL/Plaxton B34F DP164-72 (N701-9 GUM), now DRL201-9;

Dennis Dart 9.8SDL/East Lancs B40F N542-4 TPK now DS22-24;

Dennis Dart 9SDL/Northern Counties B35F L120-6/51 YVK, now DS120 etc;

Dennis Dart 9SDL/Plaxton B35F M160-3 SKR, now D160-3;

Of these, all Darts except DS121, along with L700, MD436, MRL440/1, DL12 and 14 are in Arriva aquamarine, the balance in Londonlinks/London & Country two-tone green/red.

The acquired fleet is supplemented by driver trainers Leyland Atlantean AN68B/1R/Roe H43/30F AN262 (KPJ 262W), National Greenway/B41F LN343/4 (SIB 6713/4, UPE 215M, WPG 216M) ex-ZDT343/4 and Freight Rover Sherpa ZDT954 (D954 VCW); and crew ferry vehicles Leyland National 11351A/1R/B49F LN478 (NPJ 478R), 10351B/1R/B41F LN511 (EPD 511V) ex-ZFB257, 511 and MCW Metrorider MF150/B25F ZFB136 (E136 KYW).

AEC Routemaster RM385 (WLT 385) sustained severe rear-end damage when struck from behind by an articulated lorry at Clapham Junction, but it is expected to be repaired. Eerily, this was at the same spot where RM18 ended its active service after being struck from behind a few years ago by a route 88 bus. Work is progressing as workshop time permits to restore RM736 (XYJ 418, WLT 736) for further service.

Two accident victims withdrawn recently were MCW Metrobus M638 (KYV 638X), after being deroofed at Finsbury Park station bridge, and M1286 (B286 WUL), after a bad contretemps on route N73. Accident-damaged M1122 (B122 WUL) has been scrapped at Enfield Repair Centre.

Metrobus M734 (KYV 734X) has been transferred to Arriva Scotland West.

Arriva Midlands North AA

Just five Bristol VRs remained here in December, these being 1823 (BMA 523W) at Oswestry, 1858/60/70 (VCA 458/60W, WTU 470W) at Wellington and 1887 (AHW 206V) at Swadlincote. The only other Bristol is three LH driver trainers - TV81 (NGR 681P) at Swadlincote and TV84/6 (SNU 384R, XPT 686R) at Cannock.

The coaches sold to Dunn-Line (see last month's News) with the Stevensons' Coaches business are listed under the Dunn-Line heading.

Arriva North East/Northumbria AA

Northumbria's new Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns are 4501-15 (V501-15 DFT). Forty Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD B29F are 1703-42 (V703, 612, 705-42 VNL), of which 1703-27 are for North East (1708/9 at Durham, 1712/3/6-8 at Bishop Auckland and 1720-2 at Stockton) and 1728-42 are for Northumbria where they are expected to cascade MetroRiders to Arriva

Body type

A	Articulated
B	Single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats/bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker (ie with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other types, with conventional gangways are H [Highbridge] regardless of overall height)
O	Open-top
CO	Convertible open-top

Seating capacity

(For double-deckers this is shown with the upper-deck capacity first, eg 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where these are not known a total figure is given).

Door position

F	Front
R	Rear
C	Centre
D	Dual doors

When platform doors are fitted where these would not normally figure, usually on rear entrance buses, this is indicated by D after the door position. The letter 't' after the door indicates the provision of a toilet whilst L after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

Re-registrations

Where a vehicle is re-registered its previous registration numbers follow in italic type, with the most recent given first where it has been registered more than once.

Vehicle reports should be sent to

J. G. Lidstone, 76 Thames Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 2XD.

Please mark your envelope 'Fleet News'.



Scotland West; indeed, MetroRider 901 (P61 XTN) has already moved north of the border. 4082 (V653 LWT) is another DAF SB220LF/Plaxton Prestige B45F for North East whose nine DAF SB3000/Plaxton Prima C51F interurban coaches are 1206-14 (V206-14 DJR).

1708 is branded for service 65 (Durham-South Hetton), 1719 for services 86/87 (Stockton-Stillington), 1720 for service 30 (Middlesbrough-Coulby Newham), 1721/2 for 66/67 (Middlesbrough-Nunthorpe/Netherfields), 1206-9 for 93/93A (Middlesbrough-Scarborough) and 1210-4 for X4/X14 (Middlesbrough-Saltburn/ Bishop Auckland).

DAF SB220LFs transferred from Northumbria to North East are Northern Counties B39F-bodied 4059 (R701 KCU) and Plaxton Prestige B41F-bodied 4060-3/5-9/70-3 (S702-4/6/7-11 KFT, S712-5 KRG).

In the opposite direction, North East Leyland Tiger 1346 (C41 CWT), Leyland National 2s 3140/7/52, 3747/9, (A140 FDC, ARN 895Y, A542 PCW, WRA 224Y, RRA 219X) and Leyland Olympians 7210/34 (CWR 505Y, A234 GHN) have been transferred to Northumbria.

North East has received SB220/Optare Delta B49F former demonstrators 4083/4 (F792 DWT, G785 PWL) from Arriva Midlands North.

North East DAFs 4080/1 are now in livery after operating in allover white. Northumbria DAF SB3000s 291-5 (R291-5 KRG) are renumbered 1201-5.

Optare MetroRider 2601 (L601 FHN) returned to Optare for accident repairs and SB220 4016 (K416 BHN) achieved notoriety recently when it ran into the rear of MetroRider 2724 (R724 MHN).

Now withdrawn and/or for disposal by North East are Leyland Tigers 7258 (B598 SWX), 1308/12/3/44, 1417/31/3/4 (E268/72/3 KEF, C34 CWT, B115 GRR, YLX 281, 681 CXM, 648 WHK), National Greenways 3506/8/12/3/6-8/20-2 (SIB 6706/8, 1282/3/6-8, PDZ 6262, SIB 6715/6), Leyland National 2s 3130/1/6/49/50 and 3744/5/8/56/72 (A130/1/6 FDC, ARN 897/8Y, WAO 399/5Y, WRA 225Y, NTU 12Y), DAF SB220 4003 (G211 HCP) and Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 2448/66/73/9 (D648 CVN, E466/73/9 EAJ). 3131, 3744/9/56 and similar National 2 3749 (RRA 219X) have been cannibalised at Darlington.

Northumbria has withdrawn Bristol VRT/SL3s 536/47/8/58/63/80/3/4/90 (CPT 734S, HUP 757/8T, SGR 777V, SGR 784V, APT 810/6/7W, PAJ 827X), Bristol LH6L 637 (MUP 714T) and MCW Metroriders 801/20/32/41/2 (E801 BTN etc). 536/47/8/58/80/3, 637, 801/32/6 and similar 827 (E827 BTN) have gone to Hardwick (dealer), Carlton; 563 went to Arriva Midlands North, 584 and Leyland Tigers 1402/32 (C132 HJN, 445 YMU) went to North East Bus Breakers, Annfield Plain; 590 went to Double Deck Bus Company, 820 to NDY (dealer), Quarrington Hill, and similar 841/2 (E841/2 BTN) to Gardiner, Spennymoor.

Northumbria Bova Futura 134 (NMS 700) has been sold to Paul's, Huddersfield and Leyland National 724 (GPD 296N) is with preservationists in Southwark, London.

The days of the Bristol are almost over at Northumbria, with the last remaining VRT/SL3s scattered around in penny numbers. Ashington has 562/70/2/81, Berwick 546, Hexham 527/53, Jesmond 540/1 and Morpeth 538/76. North East's last Bristol/ECW, VRT/SL3 driver trainer 9995 (UGR 698R) has been withdrawn and, commendably, was on offer to the Bristol VR Enthusiasts' Society as these notes were compiled.

Previously-withdrawn North East Tigers 1305/42 (B266 KPF, C42 CWT) went to Midlands North, 1314 (E274 KPF) to Lister, Bolton (dealer), Tiger 1433 (681 CXM) — listed above — and Olympian 7256 (B256 RAJ) going to North East Bus Breakers, Annfield Plain.

North East National 2s 3757/71 (FCA 10X, NTU 11Y) have become driver trainers 9996/7.

Arriva Southend AA

Ex-Yorkshire Scania K113CRBs 4352/4 entered service in Green Line colours, but without any lettering applied and with toilets still in place. 4351 is first of the four to go to be refurbished by Kent Coachworks, losing its toilet and gaining new trim and National Express-style seat moquette. 4353, on loan to The Shires at Luton as a standby vehicle for Flightline service 757, was next in line for refurbishment.

The days of the Leyland Tiger have suddenly nearly closed with the loss of all but Duple Caribbean-bodied 4307 (A247 SVW) and Plaxton Paramount 4304 (A141 EPA), one example and one Plaxton Paramount. Thus withdrawn are 4306 (A246 SVW), sent into storage at Luton and 4312 (B100 XTW) at Colchester; 4308/9 (A248/9 SVW) withdrawn at Southend along with 4313 (B83 SWX) — all withdrawn upon ticket expiry — and 4314/5 (B84/5 SWX) withdrawn after engine failure. 4311 (A124 EPA) was withdrawn after its rear end hit the garage bus wash. Theoretically, Tigers should never have appeared on Green Line 721/2/3 but they were kept on for these duties owing to a shortage of newer coaches.

One day after last month's notes were completed, welcome news came that coach-seated double-deckers are again employed when appropriate on express services to London, Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympians being most common. Double-deck capacity has proved itself on special event days and summer Sundays, as well as to satisfy occasional peaks of demand.

Volvo Olympian 5415 (N705 TPK) has sustained severe accident damage and has gone away for repairs.

The cannibalised remains of Leyland Fleetline 5323 (XTE 223V) were towed away in early December; 5330 (XTE 230V) remaining under cannibalisation at London Road in late-December — so the report of it working in Sydney is just a tad incorrect.

Sadly, the last 'big-fleet' halfcab bus in Southend, AEC Regent III special events vehicle 1174 (KTF 594), has been advertised for sale — to be fair, probably because the new depot has no covered vehicle accommodation. Never operated in passenger service here (and without upper deck seating), it has been a useful goodwill vehicle for all kinds of events.

Arriva The Shires AA

R758 DUB is another Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver transferred from Yorkshire.

Arriva Yorkshire AA

The ex-Arriva Surrey & West Sussex East Lancs-bodied Dennis Arrows continue to trickle into service. By 23 October, only three were at work, but during November, 502-6/8 (N802 TPK etc) entered traffic with only 510 (N810 TPK) left outstanding. They operate on service 268 (Bradford-Dewsbury) and Heckmondwike workings into Leeds.

Wright-bodied Volvo B10Bs 406-9 (L406-9 NUA) are branded 'Arriva Express'

Further Leyland Lynx IIs to benefit from mid-life refurbishment are 367/80/1/3/81 (J367/8/70/13 YWX, J381 BWU). All repainting is now executed at Belle Isle as the paintshops in Dewsbury garage have been closed.

Leyland Olympian 566 (A566 NWX) is reallocated from Pontefract to Dewsbury.

Cummins-engined Leyland Lynx 267 (E267 WUB) has been withdrawn following an engine fire. Other Lynxes withdrawn are 271/8, 304/15 (E271 WUB, F278, 304 AWW, E116 UTX). Optare MetroRider 717 (J717 CUM) and Mercedes-Benz Varios 758/64 (R758/64 DUB) have been transferred to The Shires. As reported in December. Arriva Cymru snapped up Lynxes 304/15 and 320 (G324 NNW), while 271/8 have gone to Powells Bus, Hellaby and 291 (F291 AWW) is with Smith, Langley Park.

Confirmation of earlier Leyland Olympian disposals is that 506/8/10/2/76 (CWR 506/8/10/2Y, A576 NWX) went to Arriva Cymru, 533/46/50/1 (EWX 533/46/50/1Y) to The Shires and 538/40/5/60 (EWX 538Y etc) were cannibalised for spares, then sold for scrap, 540 after accident damage.

Aston Express, Killamarsh

A new delivery is Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD 246 (V246 BNV), to B29F maximum capacity with a sister expected as 247 (V247 BNV). In Fleet News, I show the maximum seating capacity where this may vary (for example, 246 can drop to B26F plus 21 standees to accommodate a wheelchair or buggy).

Marshall-bodied Dennis Dart M718 WUD has been replaced by Wright-bodied Dart T441 EBD, now back in service again, although it was on standby at the depot for two weeks.

Further fleetnumbers confirmed are Mercedes-Benz/Optare StarRiders 39, 40, 88, 92/9 (F39, 40 CWY, G88, 92/9 KUB) — all five have been advertised for sale.; Optare MetroRiders 191-4 (R91-94 HUA); Dennis Dart/Wright 529/31 (R529/31 YRP); Dart/UVG 566/7 (R566/7 UOT); DAF/Plaxton coaches 636/8 (D636/8 WNU); Leyland Fleetlines DD1-4 (SDA 634, 515S; WJI 6160/58) and Leyland Atlantean DD5 (VBA 161S).

DD5 created a little interest recently by appearing in normal service rather than its usual schools workings.

Axe Valley Mini Travel, Seaton

Leyland National 2/B44F KEP 829X has been acquired from Stephenson, Rochford, while other vehicles in the fleet are Leyland Atlantean/Roe H43/30F KPJ 273W; Atlantean/East Lancs H43/32F DDK 24W; Freight Rover Sherpa/Dormobile B16F D586 EWS; Iveco 49.10/Robin Hood B21F D858 FOT; Dodge S56/Reeve Burgess B23F L134/44/68 LTA; S56/Dormobile B23F PYP 553Y; Leyland National/B49F WUH 173T and Bedford/Duple Dominant C53F NMW 329X.

Sherpa D106 TFT has been sold to Trev's, Talaton and Bedford YRQ JCV 411N is awaiting disposal.

Barnsley & District YT

Leyland National 160 (NTV 729M) is out of use and previously-withdrawn National 105 (NFN 78M) has been sold.

Batley & District

Leyland National 11351A/1R/B49F SGR 559R entered service in the two-tone blue and cream livery in which it arrived.

Bebb, Llantwit Fardre

The first low-floor buses here are Optare Excel/B38F V78/9, 81 JKG, which have replaced Autobus DP-bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios R78, 79, 81 EDW, sold to Mid West (dealer), Staverton. The Excels are operating Beddau-Cardiff express services.

Black Prince, Morley

New Optare MetroRider 237 (V237 LWU) is service. Ex-Newport Scania BR112DH 89 (JBO 89W) has been withdrawn after fire damage.

Blue Triangle, Rainham

DL901-9 (V901-9 FEC), the Dennis Tridents/East Lancs Lolyne H45/21D for route 474, are 9.9m long.

Leyland Titans T68, 96 (CUL 68, 96V) have been acquired from Avon, Prenton and have been busy on rail replacement work in Avon's blue and white colours.

RCL2260 (CUV 260C), numerically the last Routemaster coach, has repainted in traditional Green Line colours with sympathetic gold Blue Triangle fleetnames.

Bowers, Chapel-en-le-Frith

Two Optare Solos are on order, following the hire of Optare Solo demonstrator V110 LVH.

A depot fire on 18 September 18 — reported as arson — destroyed Leyland Nationals JOX 503/10P, NOE 587R, PUK 629R, XGR 728R and WUH 166T, as well as three coaches and a minibus (details of which are not yet confirmed). NOE 587R and PUK 629R had only just been repainted in Unibus livery for the High Peak College contract, while engineless WUH 166T had just been acquired and was still in Stagecoach Red & White colours. The remains of JOX 510P, NOE 587R and WUH 166T were broken up on-site.

Trent Buses lent Bowers its Leyland Nationals 481/4/9, 502/46/54, 1458/81 (XAL 481/4/9S, YRR 502T, UFX 852S, VEU 228T, PRR 458R, KAL 481S) and to help cover coaching commitments, Hulleys of Baslow sent Volvo B10Ms 3, 10 (F24 HGG, G945 JPW).

Former Stagecoach Devon Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess DP25F F411 KOD replaced the lost minibus.

Van Hool-bodied Scania PRD 34 (*F113 JPP*) has been re-registered and sold; Van Hool Alizée-bodied Scania K113CRB M222 CDY (*M134 GAD*) is the new PRD 34, perpetuating part of the identity of Reading 34, a Burlingham-bodied AEC Reliance. Plaxton-bodied Scania D419 HPO (*SJ1 502T, D662 YRP*) is confirmed as IUI 9144. Toyota Optimo K429 JDT (*K4 HDT*) is now NIL 9936.

Brighton & Hove GA

Only 11 Bristol VRT/SL3s — 250/9/60/4/5/70/2/3/7-9 — remained active in December, while 257/61/2 were in store at Lewes Road. A farewell tour is to be run in the spring.

If you are keen to follow — or even wallow in — Bristol products, I can recommend the Bristol Interest Circle which kindly makes available its illustrated journal *Bristol Passenger* to Fleet News. Send a stamped address envelope for details to the Bristol Interest Circle, 18 Downs Cote View, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, BS9 3TU, or e-mail chairman and editor Allan Macfarlane on Macfarlane.ar@tesco.net.

Brylaine, Boston

Another new Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F is V992 VNB. Older Varios S309/10 DLG are on loan until February, when five new Vario/Beaver 2s are expected.

Former London & Country Leyland Olympian TPD 124X has been acquired and re-registered XAZ 1412.

Coaches PFW 839V and XAZ 1301 (*A820 LEL*) and Leyland Fleetlines SDA 772S and XAZ 1412 (*SDA 564S*) have been withdrawn and dumped at Wyberton along with WIA 7680, XAZ 1315 (*RAZ 6947*), MUT 777W, Leyland National XAZ 1404 (*CBV 791S*).

Fleetline OJD 434R has been cannibalised at Coningsby and its remains disposed of, along with withdrawn coaches DJL 581V, CJL 639V and GBH 511T.

Group codes

AA — Arriva Passenger Services
BL — Blazefield Holdings
EY — EYMS Group
FG — First Group
GA — Go-Ahead Group
NX — National Express
SG — Status Bus & Coach Group
ST — Stagecoach Holdings
YT — Yorkshire Traction

Opposite:

Arriva East Herts & Essex has eight Volvo B6BLEs with 41-seat Wright Crusader 2 bodies. 3253 (V253 HBH), based at Harlow and route branded for Roding Valley services 500/2, was photographed next to a concrete ex-London Transport bus shelter in Theydon Bois. Three identical buses in the same series operate with The Shires.
R. GODFREY

Burgin European, Sheffield

The first vehicles noted with fleetnumbers are Neoplan 20 and 93 (BUI 5220, L93 OAR), Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger 38 (ERF 74Y), ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3s 65-7 (ODL 665-7R) and Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard 72 (GGM 72W). Mercedes-Benz USU 638 (*K84 JNU*) has been numbered 84 but is for sale.

Cardiff Bus

Leyland Lynx 269 (J269 UDW) has appeared in a revised livery of white with orange skirt and roof, single-deckers' roofs having previously been brown.

East Lancs-bodied Leyland Olympians 509/12/6 (RBO 509Y, A512/6 VKG) and coach-seated 560/2-5/7 (C560 GWO etc) were withdrawn in November. 516 is now with Boomerang Bus Co, Tewkesbury and 560/2-5/7 are with Happy A's, Birkenhead.

Chester City Transport

I can confirm that LAG 188V is one of the Leyland National 2s acquired ex-Stagecoach East Midland.

Country Lion, Northampton

Former Northampton Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/Alexander PBD 42R, CNH 56T and VVV 61S are in stock ex-Britains Coaches and can still be seen daily in Northampton.

Ex-Viscount ECW-bodied VRT VEX 301X is also at work, still in Peterborough City Council livery, working with on-hire labelling.

Cygnnet, Darton

Leyland Nationals 33/6 (UHG 734R, KRS 536V) have passed to Dunn Line, Nottingham.

Avid Leyland Leopard collector Lough Swilly has acquired Alexander-bodied 29 (GCS 68V), now its 418 (80 DL 725).

Days Coaches, Kilnhurst

Four former National Express MCW Metroliner double-deck coaches recently added to stock are OIL 5266 (*B530 AYA*), TJI 9407 (*B231 XEU*), SJI 4432 (*C531 WBF*) and C138 YJT, along with rare ex-West Midlands Metroliner TJI 1690 (*C901 JOF*).

Delaine, Bourne

A vintage bus running day and gathering planned for 30 April has been cancelled.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham

New Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzen H47/31F T399 OWA has entered service while secondhand purchases are Leyland National/B49F UHG 734R and National 2/B44F KRS 536V (*GSO 2V*) from Cygnnet, Darton.

Volvo B10M-60 coaches acquired are Jonckheere C49Ft K499 RBX and L458 VBX, and Van Hool C40Ft N264 HBX, all from dealer stock.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-53 A4 BOB and B10M-60 K574 EKY have been re-registered WJI 9364/5, taking on marks of two of the 18 vehicles acquired with the business of **Camms of Nottingham** (*Buses* September). The full list, all expected to be sold, is: Leyland Atlantean/Roe LUG 96P; Leyland Atlantean/East Lancs LRB 405/7/9W; Leyland Leopard/Plaxton GNN 218/22N, OGR 51T; Leyland Leopard/Duple XBF 54S, GHR 302W; AEC Reliance/Duple XPK 52T, YPL 80T; Volvo B10M/Plaxton RJI 1656 (*ANA 403Y*); Leyland Tiger/Duple A100 AVG; Leyland Royal Tiger/Van Hool RJI 1657/8 (*D40 HMT*, *C51 CWX*);

Neoplan N722/Plaxton 4000 TJI 4698/9 (*B101/2 XYH*); Leyland National MOD 816P.

Other Camms vehicles not reported as taken over were AEC Reliance/Duple TFJ 61X, Leopard/Plaxton WBR 5V, Leyland National RKA 886T and Dennis Dominator/Alexander FGE 438X.

Plaxton 4000 double-deck DAF coach IIL 2948 has been withdrawn and sold to Scania Bus & Coach (dealer), Workstop.

The Eagle, Morton

A new MAN 18.310/Marcopolo Continental 340 coach is on order, following on from new Iveco EuroRider 391.12.29/Beulas Stergo E C49Ft T100 ANN, in turn a sister for twin 391.12.27 N10 DME.

Current bus stock in this smartly presented fleet comprises double-deckers Bristol VRT/SL2/ECW HHH 272N, Leyland Atlantean/Alexander AL RAZ 8973/4 (AVK 178V, *SCN 244S*), Atlantean/Park Royal UNA 864S, Atlantean/East Lancs GFV 155W and WCK 215Y, MCW Metrobus BOK 22V, Dennis Dominator/Alexander RL LAZ 244S (*FGE 435X*) and single-deckers Leyland Nationals AFE 595, 610A (*TBL 177N*, *NRD 148M*), National 2 RFS 582V, Dennis Falcon HC/East Lancs KAZ 3253/4 (*YDX 103/5Y*), Leyland Lynx 6077 RE (*E673 NNV*).

Wadham Stringer-bodied Dennis Falcon YDC 24Y has been sold to Stephenson (dealer), Rochford.

East Yorkshire EY

Orders are confirmed for six new coaches imminently and 17 single-deckers for March delivery.

Ex-London United all-Leyland Olympians G292/4-7/9, 301/11 UYK are based at Anlaby Road and numbered 645-53. Ex-Go North East 543 (JTX 396X) is at Elloughton and 544 (SPY 209X) at Horsea. The Atlanteans transferred from Finglands (Fleet News last month) are numbered 890 (AN68A/2R/Alexander H49/37F AVK 177V) and 935-7 (AN68B/1R/Roe H43/30F EPH 223/9V, KPJ 284W).

Routemaster 817 (LDS 239A), freshly converted to open top but not used last summer, is languishing at Anlaby Road in grey primer — hopefully to operate this coming summer.

Volvo B10M 358 is correctly re-registered as 834 EYD.

Now withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 609D 343 (F393 JNC), the Olympians causing the loss of Bristol VRT/SL3s including 508/27 (JKH 508V, WKH 527X), 717/32/3/41/50/4/78/92 (PKM 117R, CPT 732/3S, DUP 741/50/4S, KTL 28V, BRF 692T), AEC Routemasters 801/2 (NRH 801/2A, *WLT 732/98*), Leyland Atlanteans 871/2 (PRH 244/6G) and VRT/SL2 882 (GAK 482N). Atlantean 934 (SRJ 734R) has not been withdrawn, while further vehicles reported delicensed are VRs 526 (WKH 526X), 708/11/4/8/21/5/32/41/54/79/90/3/9 (PUF 584/91R, XAK 914T, BPT 918/21/5S, CPT 732S, DUP 741/54S, KTL 29V, RUA 450W, SGR 793V, JYG 433V) and convertible open-topper 836 (VDV 136S), the last being due for conversion to a tree-topper.

Routemasters 801/2 passed to PVS (dealer), Carlton, but are being prepared for re-sale, probably for export.

Ensignbus, Purfleet

News from before the sale of this company to Town & Country is that ex-London & Country/preserved AEC Regent III RT3775 (NLE 882) has been repainted in blue and silver and now evokes memories of RT3232. Sadly, open-top RT4169 (LYF 228) had only a short stay here after its fully-liveried sojourn in Eastbourne and repaint into red/silver. It has been exported to Belgium. RT3232 (KYY 961) is still in stock, as is re-registered RT981 (CSL 498, *JXN 9*). Former Leicester Daimler CSG6/30 UJF 182 moved stock here from London Pride.

Finglands, Rusholme EY

Leyland Atlantean KPJ 286W remains active here, following transfer of the other three ex-London & Country Atlanteans to East Yorkshire.

First Badgerline FG

Guide Friday-liveried Bristol VRT/SL3 convertible 8600 (RTH 931S) is operating as a closed-topper this winter on normal service at Bath. Closed-top VRs 5146, 5555/7 (AHU 523V, LBD 922V, STW 29W) have been exported to Transporte Dan, Panama City, via Felixstowe. Bulwark Engineering converted 5555/7 with offside central entrances in place of their original entrance. 5140 and 5542 (AHU 517V, EWS 750W) are expected to follow them, while 5150 (AHW 201V) has also gone to Prins Classic Transport, Opijnen, Netherlands.

First Bradford FG

Leyland Atlantean 6360 (VWW 360X) has been withdrawn.

First Calderline FG

New Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F V994 DNB has been on loan at Halifax, numbered 9744. Allover white Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B39F P746 HND has also been here, numbered 9746.

Ex-Mainline Dennis Dominator 5551 (NKU 207X) was still not available for service in November, so similar NKU 161X has been on loan from MASS, North Anston.

Ex-First Manchester MCW Metrobus ANA 171Y is confirmed as acquired and Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties 7253 (BVR 97T) has been reinstated for further service.

Two ex-Optional Bus Leyland Nationals were under preparation for service as 1371/2.

Leyland Olympian 5095 (A95 KUM) has been withdrawn and previously-withdrawn Fleetline 7223 (ANA 25T) has gone to PVS (dealer), Carlton.

First Capital FG

Twenty-two additional low-floor double-deckers will be needed for routes 97/357 and 32 single-deckers for routes 212/236/308.

Deliveries are of 10.2m Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital B28D DML322-9 (V322-9 GBY) and 8.9m Dart SLF/Marshall B25F DMS330-5 (V330-3/5 GBY, V433 HBY).

The T/V registration split for recent new Dennis Tridents is corrected by the London Omnibus Traction Society as TN854/60/4-6/8/70/11/3/5/6/8-85 (T854 KLF etc) and TN855-9/61-3/7/9/72/4/7/82/6/7 (V855 HBY etc).

Now withdrawn are MCW Metrobuses 176, 314/21/30 (DAE 512W, GYE 434/51W, EYE 330V), Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 600/6 (F800/1 RHK), while 709D 564 (D764 KWT) is now a driver trainer.

Continuing the cascade of older vehicles out of London by many fleets, Metrobuses 104/5/9/16, 296-9 (JHE 194/38/52/46W, JWF 496-9W) have gone to First Hampshire, 118-20/77, 311/3 (JHE 148-50W, DAE 513W, BYX 311V, EYE 343V) to Western National, Dennis Dominators 184/90, 202/3 (B444/0 CKW, B102/3 WUW) to First Leicester and Volvo B6s 681-3/5/6 (L281 RML, L888 JTC, L888 AMY, L5/6 GML) to First Northampton initially for Park-&-Ride work at Milton Keynes until 31 December, after which they were to go to Leicester.

First CentreWest FG

DMS337-61, 8.9m Marshall B25F-bodied Dennis Darts, are on order for Greenford and Orpington. DMS345-55 have already been delivered, registered V345-55 DLH. Orpington also expects a further 18 two-door Marshall-bodied Dennis Darts for Croydon Tramlink feeder services.

Orpington-based Mercedes-Benz 811D/Marshall C16 B28F MM1-10 (N521-7 REW, P488-90 CEG) have gone to First Leicester.

First Eastern National FG

Leyland Olympian 4007 (C407 HJN) has had its roof repaired at Mainline's Rotherham workshops.

First Huddersfield FG

Leyland Atlantean/Roe 6205 (JUM 205V) has been reinstated for further service.

First Leeds FG

1114/5 (V114/5 LVH) have entered service at Kirkstall, completing the introduction of 1101-15, the Volvo B10LA/Wright Fusion articulated buses, to Leeds. 1113 has been branded for service 1, but 1114/5 are not to carry branding at present.

V387 KYV, a new Optare Excel with Claribel Coaches of Birmingham, at Solihull station.
CHRIS MORRISON



New Scania L94UB/Wright Access Flolines 8142/3 (V142/3 ESC) have gone into service at Bramley, completing delivery of this batch. Similar 8134/5 (V134/5 ESC) returned from loan to First Edinburgh on 28 October.

Allover white Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer SPD B41F 1201 (S861 VAT) continues to work on services 61/62 from Cherry Row on extended loan. Dart/Pointer MPD B29F demonstrator S551 WAT has been used here (as well as by Huddersfield and York).

Meanwhile, native Dart 3298 (N298 JUM) has gained a new type of Hanover electronic indicator display incorporating destination and numerals) similar to that on 8101 upwards.

Local press reports suggest a pilot scheme may be introduced to use American-style allover yellow school buses in an attempt to discourage the use of cars for the daily school run.

In this connection perhaps, Mainline's up-seated Alexander TE B65F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2R school bus, 79 (HHJ 379Y), appeared at Kirkstall garage. Scania N113DRB 8017 (H617 VNW) has been repainted allover yellow with red 'First' fleetnames. Why couldn't a more attractive scheme (e.g. yellow with red trim, relieved by white) be adopted instead?

58 (CNH 58T), the last borrowed Northampton Alexander-bodied VR departed in mid-October. The type saw little use during the summer holiday, although 48/9, 52/3 each operated on one day. 47-49, 52/3 and East Lancs-bodied 76 scurried over to Leicester after the depot fire, thwarting the originally intended plan to move them from Kirkstall to Bramley for the autumn term; First Manchester vehicles deputised for them. Of these, Leyland Atlanteans 4444/97 (SND 444/97X) went back from Bramley on 5 November, leaving Atlantean 4578 (ANA 578Y) and Metrobus 5547 (A547 KUM) now withdrawn, and Atlantean 4459 (SND 459X) and Metrobuses 5541/6 (A541/6 KUM) still in use in November.

Atlanteans 6180 and 6248 (GWR 180T, KWY 248V) have been withdrawn; 6163 and 6221 (WNW 63S, KWY 221V) have gone to PVS (dealer), Carlton.

First Leicester FG

Four ex-First Capital Dennis Dominators have been acquired. 141/2 (B102/3 WUW), DDA1001/Northern Counties H43/31F new to London Buses for comparative trials with Olympians, Metrobuses and Ailsas, went straight into service on schools duties, still in Capital yellow. The other two were B440/4 CKW, former South Yorkshire DDA901/Alexander RH H46/32F. Similar B443 CKW was expected, but was rejected owing to its Rolls-Royce engine and poor condition and B440 CKW has moved on to Mainline, successor to its original owner. Three of the B-KW batch — intended to be 2366-8 — were diverted new to Leicester as 84-6 (B84-6 MRY).

Ex-First Capital Volvo B6/Northern Counties L281 RML, L888 JTC, L888 AMY and L5/6 GML were expected in January, after finishing their Milton Keynes Park-&Ride commitments with First Northampton.

Further acquisitions from London are ex-CentreWest (Orpington) Mercedes-Benz 811D/Marshall C16 B28F 721-30 (N521-7 REW, P488-90 CEG), the complete batch MM1-10. 721/3/5/7 were first into traffic, in London red. All are expected to don a new livery, which had not been unveiled by the beginning of December. FirstGroup Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD B29F demonstrator S551 WAT has been on trial at Abbey Park Road on Birstall and Highway Road services for five days before moving on to Norwich.

Dominator driver trainer 240 (FUT 240V) has returned from loan to First York.

Ex-London Renault S75s 701-3/5/81/2/5/8/90/1/4/5 (HDZ 5459/62/5/77/81/2/5/64/90/65/40/1) have been delicensed and 705/81/2/5/8/91/4/5 are stored at Northampton St James; at least 785 is expected to go to Calderline. 704 was then the last operational 30-seater. 712/4 (HDZ 5473/8) are reallocated to Leicester. Native S56 746 (K746 VJU) has been delicensed and Volvo B10M 7 (N378 EAK) has been transferred to Northampton.

First Mainline FG

Healthy peak-hour demand has prompted investment in 26 double-deckers for this year, for services 53 (Low Edges), 60 (Crimicar) and 97 (Totley). Local press reports suggest more will follow.

Previously used by Yorkshire Travel, Volvo B6-50/Alexander Dash B40F 3913 WE (N324 HUA) and KIB 6110 (N390 EUG) have become Mainline 496/9. 496 went straight to Rotherham workshops for refurbishment, but 499 was in use in the same town in allover white.

Wright-bodied Volvo B10BLEs 875/6 (T875/6 MAK) and B6BLEs 459-63 (T459-63 JDT) have been fitted with aerials for the Quest 51 real-time information project in Sheffield. Intriguingly, B10BLE 884 (T884 ODT), entered service with First Bradford legal lettering, probably in error.

MCW Metrobus 1924 (B924 CDT) has been on loan to First Huddersfield briefly.

Accident-damaged Volvo B10M 715 (K715 EDT) is back in service at Doncaster.

Dennis Dominators 2311/3-5/20 (A311 XAK etc) are back in use at Olive Grove, ex-reserve, but Dominators 2279 and 2431 (UWJ 279Y, A431 YAK) have been withdrawn. Now set aside for disposal are Renault S56s 311/5/26/8/79 (G311/5/26/8 NWB, H379 UWB), MCW Metrobus 1909 (A109 XWE) and Dominators 2105/29/33/40/9/67, 2203/42/79, 2351/8 (KKU 105W, MWB 849/53W, OWE 140X, NKU 149/67, 203X, SDT 242Y, UWJ 279Y), 2105/33, 2203 and 2351 have been cannibalised along with Dominator 2151 (NKU 151X) at Rotherham. PVS (dealer), Barnsley has removed the remains of 2105 and 2203. Parts from 2203 have been used to rejuvenate Dominator 2288 (UWJ 288Y) after it sustained severe accident damage in October 1998. Dominator 2206 (NKU 206X) has also been sold, as have Renaults 305/7/38/89 (G305/7/38 NWB, H389 UWB) and MCW Metrobus 1861 (JHE 161W). Renaults 306/11 have gone for scrap.

Dominators 2119/34/65/80/93, 2217 (KKU 119W, MWB 854W, NKU 165/80/93, 217X) have passed to MASS, North Anston.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Tiger school bus 79 (HHJ 379Y) has gone to Kent County Council and is expected to stay there pending delivery of vehicles being converted for Kent.

The current reserve fleet comprises Tiger 79 along with open-top Leyland Atlantean 287, articulated Leyland-DABs 2001-13, Leyland Titan PD3 tow-bus 9010 and driver trainers Leyland Leopard 9106 and Dominator 9110. A new loan fleet comprises Leyland National 17, Dodge 235 and Dominator 2161, plus preserved Daimler 9005 and Leyland PD2 9012.

Rare Leyland-DAB/Leyland National artic 2006 (CRM 927T) has been acquired from Wigley (dealer), Carlton for preservation. Earlier MAN artic 2001/4 (DAK 301/4V) are reported to still be at work in Australia, 2001 at Caloundra and 2004 at Cairns. Barnsley-area services 306/339/342/349, 433/434/438 and 503 operated for the last time on 4 September.

First Manchester FG

The next Wright-bodied Scania L94UBs will be numbered 121-41 (i.e. leaving out 120) and the 30 Mercedes-Benz Citaros will be 301-30.

First Northampton FG

Leicester Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Premiere 350 C53F 7 (N378 EAK) is transferred here, initially expected as cover for the refurbishment of Duple 340-bodied Leyland Tigers 19, 20 (PXI 8935, NTL 655), but 20 has been reallocated to Leicester.

The Bristol VR refuses to die here. Ex-Lincoln East Lancs-bodied 46 (UFE 40W) made fitful appearances until October and was then withdrawn, only to be reinstated in November. However, by that time, nothing had been seen in service of ex-London MCW Metrobuses 397 and 497, acquired to replace both 46 and sister 47 (UFW 41W) which had been on loan to First Leeds.

Another non-standard type acquired is CentreWest's pair of Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Marshall Master B28F, now numbered 719/20 (P825/6 NAV). They entered service in CentreWest red/yellow with Northampton vinyls and have proved popular with public and drivers alike; one was running in December with hand-written destination blinds.

Unexpected temporary arrivals before Christmas were ex-First Capital Volvo B6-50/Northern Counties B39F 431/3/5 (L888 JTC, L281 RML, L888 AMY) and similar, but B31F 432/4 (L5, 6 GML), in use on a Christmas Park-&Ride contract in Milton Keynes before moving on to Leicester. Three operated from Milton Keynes Bowl and two from Milton Keynes Coachway; they were joined by Leicester's 424 (L4 GML), necessary to cover for a daily relay refuelling at a local Total public filling station as their fuel tanks proved insufficient for their 13-hour days on this work.

Arriva Bus & Coach's allover white rental fleet Ikarus-bodied DAF SB220 801 (S401 JUA) and Northern Counties-bodied SB220s 803/4 (P905/6 PWW), moved here after their initial stint in Leicester and were still operating in Northampton in early December. Step-entrance 803/4 have been noted on low-floor service 27.

Volvo B10M/Duple 300 111/2 (E111 NNV, G112 ENV) have been upseated from C49F to C51F for schools work, while 113/4 (G113/4 ENV) have been resealed from C51F to C53F.

In addition to 89/90, unrepainted Volvo B10Ms 84, 91/3/4/9 and 121/5-8 retain their names. GRT-style livery is still carried by 19, 31-5, 84, 91/3/4/9, 121/5-8 and 270; Volvo B10L gales 501-6 retain their special green/silver scheme.

The last of the unloved ex-London RW-class Wright-bodied Renault S75s, 712/4 (HDZ 5473/8) have been withdrawn and replaced by the Varios and are transferred to Leicester, prior to which 712 had been the only Leicester-liveried RW-class S75 not to have worked there.

To correct earlier notes, many of the vehicles reported (under Leicester heading) as loaned here following the vandal attack earlier last year) were used only on 8 August and then were only stored in the yard. However, the last remaining examples lingered on to late November and were Northern Counties-bodied Renault 755 (J755 MFP) and Wright-bodied 788 (HDZ 5464). Alexander-bodied Bristol VR 52 (CNH 52T) has now ceased its schools work in Leicester and has been dumped in the yard as a non-runner.

First PMT FG

New here is Iveco 49.10/Whitacre M12 117 (V117 DLH) in a white livery for the Moorlands Traveller 21 taxibus service at Leek.

Optare Solo demonstrator V236 LWU, temporarily numbered 84, was on loan at Chester to cover for native examples undergoing warranty work.

Unlikely acquisitions continue with the arrival of Leyland Atlantean AN68C/1R/Northern Counties H43/32F 626/7 (ANA 616Y, A658 HNB) from First Manchester.

A surprising repaint is Bristol VRT/SL3/501 709 (GRF 709V), out of Pennine blue and yellow and into standard red and yellow; it is now based at Crewe.

Withdrawals to note are of Mercedes-Benz 608D 209 (D184 VRP), L609D 459 (D459 ERE) and 609Ds 473 (F473 BRF) and 552 (G836 GLD).

First York FG

Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B37F 3374 has been registered V154 LUA.

In an unusual coincidence, this V-LUA Dart has arrived while two LUA-V Leyland Nationals — 1321/9 (LUA 321/9V) — are still at work, in the shape of Leyland Nationals; 16 Nationals remained allocated here, all but 1350 being active at the time.

Group codes

AA — Arriva Passenger Services
BL — BlazeField Holdings
EY — EYMS Group
FG — First Group
GA — Go-Ahead Group
NX — National Express
SG — Status Bus & Coach Group
ST — Stagecoach Holdings
YT — Yorkshire Traction



Up to three First Manchester Leyland Atlanteans have been on loan at any one time recently. Another to appear on schools specials is AN68B/1R/Northern Counties H43/32F 4471 (SND 471X), which still carried First Leeds branding from its stay there, and whose arrival allowed 4497 (SND 497X) to return to Leeds. *Loans were to continue until some Atlanteans are transferred permanently from Leeds.*

First Bradford Atlantean 6336 (VWX 336X) from First Bradford is out of use at James Street and has not yet been used here.

More buses in all-over dark green livery include National 363, Darts 3208/9/304 and Olympian 5194. To add salt to the possible wound, 363 had previously worn York-West Yorkshire commemorative livery.

Leyland National 2 1348 (PNW 601W) has returned to service but previously-withdrawn Atlantean 6430 (KPJ 261W) has gone to PVS (dealer), Carlton for scrap.

Fishwick, Leyland

Two further Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F are now in stock, EAP 988V from Stagecoach Hampshire Bus and LFJ 879W from Stagecoach United Counties.

Fleetline Buses, Markfield

Not previously recorded, this all double-deck fleet comprises Leyland Atlantean/Alexander KSA 178P, Atlantean/East Lancs MNU 623/30P and SNU 456X, Atlantean/Northern Counties STV 667S, BTV 655T and RNU 430/4/42X along with Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties UTV 218/9S.

Two peak-hour routes between Markfield and Leicester are operated as well as schools services.

Go-Bus, Chesterfield

Recently acquired ex-Brewers Leyland National 158 (XEU 858T) has been upgraded from B44F to DP41F and wears a new version of the blue and cream livery with cream sweeping up from the front to the rear.

Nationals in use in December were 107/11/28/63 and 270 (YPL 407T, AAK 111T, YPL 428T, YPF 763T, YFB 970V), while 133/61 (XPD 233N, PJT 261R) are now withdrawn and being cannibalised.

The only non-Leyland National in the fleet, ex-The Shires MCW Metrorider E977 DNK, has been operated on new Derbyshire Countybus Sunday tendered services from Matlock, 64 (Clay Cross), 158 (Bonsall) and 172 (Bakewell).

Go North East GA

A new shoppers' city centre shuttle service has found work for two withdrawn Optare MetroRiders, 338/41 (J938/41 JJR). The pair is freshly outshopped in a mainly white dedicated livery for exclusive use on this. Recent repaints have eliminated of the last traces of Low Fell Coaches and VFM Buses liveries, while the erstwhile Coastline and OK Travel liveries are down to a mere handful.

The Northern General Transport Preservation Group has acquired Leyland National 4598 (VPT 598R) from Barnsley & District.

Goodsir, Holyhead

Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F VEX 296X is in stock from Eastern Counties and wears an orange, white and black livery.

Grayscroft, Mablethorpe

Current double-deck stock comprises former London Country Leyland Atlantean/Roe WIW 672 (KPJ 285W), former Nottingham Atlantean/Northern Counties MVO 414W, former Busways Alexander-bodied Atlanteans AVK 153/83V and former West Yorkshire Bristol VRT/SL2 JWW 227N.

AVK 153V and JWW 227N wear Grayscroft white, blue and red livery and AVK 183V still wears Magic Bus blue. AVK 180V is not owned.

The unique open-top former Maidstone & District AEC Reliance AFE 719A (325 NKT) is in store along with Burlingham-bodied Ford Thames 570E GCC 3.

Guide Friday

Cardiff's first Leyland Olympian, ONLXB/1R/East Lancs H43/31F LBO 501X has been acquired from Munden (dealer), Bristol.

Halton Borough Transport

New are Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital 12-14 (V993-5 LLG).

Harrogate & District BL

Leyland Swift 173 (F173 SMT) has been in occasional use past official withdrawal and remained available for service as these notes were being written. Previously-withdrawn Swifts 172, 207 (F172 SMT, G114 VMM) have been in store at Starbeck with lettering removed ready for disposal to Ripley (dealer), Carlton; 207 has defective engine

Holmes, Clay Cross

New are Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814s V485 XJV and V895 LOH, with Autobus Nouvelle 2 C33F bodies. Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814D G697 LWF and Optare StarRider-bodied H848 UUA were sold in part-exchange.

Hornsby, Ashby

Ex-Nottingham Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/Northern Counties H47/31D JRC 682V and AN68C/1R/Northern Counties H47/33D MVO 423W have been acquired.

Hulleys, Baslow

Ex-Sovereign Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess B25F G905 UPP has replaced Robin Hood-bodied 709D E71 MVV, now sold to Ripley (dealer), Carlton.

Willowbrook-bodied 14 (Q364 FVT, LXX 817H), the last Leyland Leopard in the fleet, has been written off and scrapped after a head-on collision with a car.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M 3 (F24 HGG) has been on loan to Bowers of Chapel-en-le-Frith following the severe fire there.

Isle Coaches, Owston Ferry

Roe-bodied Leyland Fleetline TET 745S was retired from normal service in August and its passing was to be marked by a farewell tour at the end of October.

Johnson Bros., Hodthorpe

Well known for its Bristol VR fleet, this company has taken over Redfern Coaches, Mansfield, leading in turn to the temporary transfer of VRT/SL2 HWE 826N and VRT/SL3s RWT 546R, PFE 544V, SVL 177/9W to Mansfield.

The closing fleet for Redfern is suggested as Daimler Fleetlines GWA 818N, HJA 120N, JVM 993N, Leyland Fleetlines SDA 637S, XRR 289S, GTO 301V; Leyland Atlantean RTV 438X; Van Hool T818s DJI 9059, GIL 3206 and YSV 604; Bedford YNT LIB 1796 and YMTs CNU 613T, JRB 330V.

Keighley & District BL

Several newer Olympians and Volvo single-deckers from 501 upwards are fitted with transponders to change traffic lights as they approach; the Olympians carry black discs next to their fleetnumbers.

Volvo B10B 514 has lost Airedale Hospital service 669 branding; B10BLEs 540-51 have replaced double-deckers on Airedale Shuttle services 662/3/5.

Leyland Tiger 250 has regained a cab door and Wayfarer ticket equipment for use on normal service.

Lone Volvo B10M 241 (A16 KDT) has been sold off — with its cherished registration — to Wray, Knaresborough.

Kent County Council

Uncommon former First Glasgow Dennis Dorchester SDA804/Alexander TS B53F A102/5 RGE have been undergoing conversion for use as school buses at Mainline's Rotherham workshops.

Kettlewell, Relford

A stylish new delivery is Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzen V335 EAK.

Acquired Leyland Royal Tiger 670 PUO was originally A321 XHE.

Leon, Finningley

Leyland Fleetlines 134/42 (TSJ 34S, LMS 170W) have been demoted to schools duties and Fleetline 129 (ANA 49T) is withdrawn.

Leven Valley, Great Ayton

New Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F V717 GGE is in store on Hartlepool area rural bus grant-aided service 518 (Marina-Dalton Piercy).

London Central/London

General GA

Double-deck orders currently call for 172 Volvo B7Ls, plus 13 Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents for London General's route 88.

AVL1-46 (V101-10, 211, 112-4 LGC), the first B7Ls, will have Alexander ALX400 bodywork and are for London Central routes 45 and 63. Plaxton Presidents will follow on for Central's 229, 401 and 422 at Bexleyheath, while General expects 88 President-bodied B7Ls, 49 at Merton and 39 at Stockwell for routes 37, 44, 77/77A and 270.

London Central's 17 DAF SB220/East Lancs Millennium B33D for Millennium Transit services M1 and M2 (see page 36) are numbered internally as MD1-17, but display numbers 2001-17 (V1-17 GMT) — all with appropriate cherished registration marks for Greenwich Mean Time. MD1-7/11-7 (2001-7/11-7) are SB220GS diesels, while MD8-10 (2008-10) are LPG-fuelled SB220GG gas buses; MD9-17 (2009-17) have electronic guidance equipment for use on route M1.

It's been suggested that London Central's SP class of Optare-bodied DAF DB250s will move from route 3 to route 89 in February, rather than going en-masse to Go North East. Several, however, have been appearing at Mainline's Rotherham workshops for alterations including entrance step modifications and removal of drivers' anti-vandal protection screens.

Unique doored Routemaster DRM2516 (WLT 516) has made unusual appearances on route KU1 (Tooting-Kingston University) and Surrey school route 668.

MCW Metrobus M1389 (89 CLT) has been downgraded to a driver trainer in a new red/blue dedicated training livery. M357 (GYE 357W) has been withdrawn as have Leyland Titans T853, 932 (A853 SUL, A932 SYE). T923, 1015/41/53/5 (A923 SYE, A614/41/53/5 THV) have passed to Blue Triangle (dealer), Rainham, but the remains of cannibalised Routemaster RM71 (UFF 380, VLT 71) are still at New Cross. Optare MetroRider MRL190 (H690 YGO) has been sold to White Star, Lockerbie.

London Traveller, Neasden

New East Lancs-bodied Volvo B6BLEs V501-15 EFR have all entered service, V514 EFR after exhibition at Coach & Bus 99.

In addition to London Transport routes 187/487, the company operates schools services 143, 302, 626, 643, H12 and contracts.

Dennis Arrow R1 LTB has been reallocated to Harlesden with Leyland Lynx D156 HML and Leyland National THX 123S.

London United/Westlink

Seventy-one Volvo B7L double-deckers are expected, 45 with Alexander ALX400 bodies and 26 with Plaxton President bodies, for routes 71, 111, 220, 337 and H32. The 16 DPS-class Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs for route 72 will be 10.1m long.

DP81-99 (V781-5, 886, 787-99 FKX). are further 10.7m Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B31D

Leyland Nationals LS84, 99, 335 (OJD 884/99R, AYR 335T) have been withdrawn and LS195 (the last National used in service), 227 and 373 (THX 195, 227S, BYW 373V) have become driver trainers.

DAF SB220s DA4, 9 (G932/7 MYG) have gone to Rest & Ride, Smethwick, Dennis Darts DT76, 84 (H76, 84 MOB) have been sold to McKindless, Wishaw, DT78 (H78 MOB) to Coastal, Newick, DT83/5 (H83/5 MOB) to Redby, Sunderland, DT153/8 (H153/8 NON) to Glasgow Citybus and MCW Metrobuses M526, 836 (GYE 526W, OJD 836Y) to White Rose, Staines.

Lyles, Dewsbury

Leyland National PUK 623R has been re-registered 7586 VM but retains Stagecoach colours.

Leyland Leopard 7586 VM (PUB 66W), with Duple body from VUP 510V, has a new, as yet unreported registration.

MASS, North Anston

As vehicles carry this fleetname very prominently, notes will again appear under this heading.

Ex-Mainline Dennis Dominator DDA133/Alexander H46/32F 3119/34/65/80/93/97 (KKU 119W,

MWB 854W, NKU 165/80/93, 217X) have been acquired. Dominator 2197 (NKU 217X) wears a new white livery with red roof, light green skirt and rear swoop. New 'MASStransit' fleetnames are carried with 'MASS' in red and 'transit' in green.

Five Bristol VRT/SL3s have been offered for sale.

Maun Crusader, Mansfield

Former Stagecoach Transit Dennis Dominator DD906/Northern Counties H42/31F B214 OAJ is now in stock for schools work, along with Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR/Roe H42/29D UWA 150S from Stagecoach East Midland.

Additional coaches are MAN 16.290/Jonckheere Deauville C51Ft K213 CBD and Mercedes-Benz O.817L/SC Coachbuilders Vision C31F B3 MAU (R995 DHL).

Dominator FKM 303V has been withdrawn and Caetano-bodied DAF PJI 8334 (TWW 175W) has been sold to Ripley (dealer), Carlton.

Metrobus, Orpington GA

Dennis Tridents 412-5 are V412-5 KMY. More new vehicles are 10.7m Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B31D 325/6/31 (V325 KMY etc).

Acquired Leyland Atlantean KPJ 270W is now in livery.

Mercedes-Benz 811D 910 (G391 CPL) has been sold to Fosseway, Chippenham.

Metroline

New vehicle orders are expected for routes 32, 82, 113 and 266 here. Meanwhile, completing existing orders are 9.9m Dennis Tridents TA115-7 (V315-7 GLB) with Alexander ALX400 H45/19D bodies and TP32 (T132 CLO) with Plaxton President H45/22D. In addition to routes 17, 43 and 134, TPs operate route 13 on evenings and Sundays. Metroline London Northern's Metrobuses are confined largely to routes 4, 135 and W7.

Further deliveries are Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B31D DLD125/6/8-31 (V125 GBY etc).

Withdrawn are Metrobuses M16, 33/5, 48, 54/8, 67, 75, 82/7 (WYW 16T etc), M124/7/63/81/9, 238/43/72 (BYX 124V etc), M356, 459/81, 564/70/4/8/94 (GYE 356W etc), M620 (KYO 620X), M656/77/93, 739/64, 800/1 (KYV 656X etc) M829 (OJD 829Y), M899, 924 (A899, 924 SUL), Dennis Darts DR90 (J390 GKH) and DT138-40 (H138-40 MOB), Dennis Lance driver trainers LN23/5 (K323/5 YJA), Mercedes-Benz 811Ds MW18, 21-6/9, 31 (NDZ 7918 etc) and MW36/7 (K510, 476 FYN).

Disposals see M106, 797 and 1117 (BYX 106V, KYV 797X, B117 WUL) go to PVS, Barnsley for scrap, M380 (GYE 80W) to Capital Vehicle Maintenance for scrap and M16, 35, 48, 54, 67, 75, 82, 124/7/63/81/9, 243/72, 356, 481, 564/70/4/8/94, 620/56/77/93, 739/64, 800/1 all went to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet (dealer), but the planned sale of withdrawn M41, 97 and 139 did not happen. MW19 and 33 (NDZ 7919/33) have been sold to MK Metro.

Millennium Travel, Sheffield

Plaxton-bodied AEC Reliance BGY 582T has been re-registered MIL 4210.

MK Metro SG

NDZ 7919/33, Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright NimBus B26F, have been acquired from Metroline London Northern.

Newport Transport

Two demonstrators busy here during November were Optare Solo/B30F V235 LWU and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD B29F V680 FPB.

The well-trodden path to Morley has been followed by latest withdrawn Scania N112DRBs 27/8 (C27/8 ETG), now with Black Prince Buses.

Nostalgiabus, Mitcham

AEC Routemaster RM2156 (CUV 156C) has been operating regularly on route 306 at present, but a *third* Routemaster — RM1571 (571 CLT) — has been derooft by the low railway bridge at Southend Lane, Sydenham. This has another Southend connection as that it was the first RM to operate in the Essex resort.

Group codes

- AA — Arriva Passenger Services
- BL — Blazefield Holdings
- EY — EYMS Group
- FG — First Group
- GA — Go-Ahead Group
- NX — National Express
- SG — Status Bus & Coach Group
- ST — Stagecoach Holdings
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Preston Bus Ltd
BASED:	221 Deepdale Road, Preston, Lancashire
FOUNDED:	1903 as Preston Corporation Tramways. began running buses in 1922. Became Preston Borough Transport in 1974. Sold to management and employees in 1993. Currently it is the only privatised municipal operator not owned by a larger group.
WHAT DOES IT OPERATE?:	Local bus services, excursions and tours, private hires, school contracts.
LIVERY:	Blue and cream. In process of changing to richer shade of blue, applied in wavy line formation on low-floor buses. Until 1966, buses were painted maroon and cream.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	119, of which 50 are double-deck (mainly Leyland Atlanteans and Olympians), 15 Leyland Lynx single-deck, 53 are Renault and Optare MetroRider midibuses, plus one coach.
MOST UNUSUAL VEHICLES:	The seven newly delivered Dennis Trident/East Lancs Lolynes may not be unusual elsewhere, but they are Preston's first non-Leyland double-deckers. In the past, few were less usual than six 27ft long, 7ft 6in wide all-Leyland PD2s rebuilt as 30ft long, 8ft wide PD3s between 1959 and 1963.

Preston Bus 190 (V190 EBV), the first of seven East Lancs-bodied Dennis Tridents, in service in December on Super Route 33.
ALAN MILLAR



Nottingham City Transport

281 (V281 DRC) is another Optare Solo. Leyland Atlanteans 693-5, at least, continued in peak hour service after the Atlantean farewell event on 27 November, but 423 and 682 (MVO 423W, JRC 682V) have been sold to Hornsby, Ashby.

Optional Bus, Horsforth

Following the sale of this business to First Leeds, Leyland National 2 1010 (MSO 10W) and Nationals 1433/766 (YPL 433T, YPF 766T) passed to Nash, Weybridge (dealer), while MCW Metroriders 4186/437/643 (F186 YDA, F437 CJK, E643 KYW) went to CMT, Aintree.

Pennine, Gargrave

Volvo-engined Leyland National 10351A/2R/B44F BYW 367, 412/37V have been acquired from Arriva North West. LN15 (BYW 437V) was the first to be prepared for service, with Purmo heating installed and the roof-mounted heating pod removed.

National 2 LN6 (JIL 8353, PWY 583W) has been rebuilt, but retains its Leyland 680 engine.

Phillips, Holywell

Ex-Leicester Carlyle-bodied Iveco 49.10 G729 WJU was acquired recently.

Poppleton, Pontefract

Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R/Duple B53F MPG 151P has entered service, but ECW-bodied Leyland Atlantean TJ1 6573 (SFV 426P) and Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Fleetline XSJ 652T have been sold.

Powell, Wickersley

44/5 (E271 WUB, F278 AWW) are ex-Arriva Yorkshire Leyland Lynx LX112L102R1S/B49F, now in service in livery.

Preston Bus

190-2, the first three Dennis Tridents with East Lancs Lolyne H45/30F bodies, arrived in early December; the batch of seven launched revamped Super Route services 33/35 on 13 December.

Leyland Lynx 211 has had its new-style livery modified at the front to match 216, with 224/6 next in line for repainting.

East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlanteans 156/61-4/6/7 (GFV 156W, OBV 161-4X, URN 166/7Y) are earmarked for early withdrawal.

Reading Mainline

AEC Routemaster 26 (NRH 803A, WLT 871) has regained its original registration.

31 (WLT 938) is back from its trek to the Czech Republic, but only for charters and other special work.

In addition to the Routemasters listed in the October issue, Routemasters 15 and 39 (WVS 423, 583 CLT) are available for service. 11, 33/4 (AST 416A, ALD 989B, 357 CLT) are out of use, 4 (ALM 11B) is likely to be sold and 7, 40/4 (VLT 44, WLT 848, ALD 966B) await a decision on their future.

2 (WLT 993) has been sold to a London fleet in cannibalised form without running units and 5 and 14/7 (WLT 937, 621 and 859 DYE) are also reported sold.

I am grateful to the London Omnibus Traction Society for this detailed update.

Redwing, London

Twenty Setra S315GTHD integrals are due for delivery, 12 to C49Ft layout and eight to C53F. This is notable the largest ever UK order for Setras.

Ross, Featherstone

Rare ex-Lothian Leyland Cub CU435/Duple Dominant 5 (HSC 173X) has passed to the Edinburgh Transport Group for preservation — thought to be the first and only postwar Cub so cherished.

Seamarks, Luton

Even before the company was acquired by Dunn-Line (see News section), Seamarks' bus fleet comprised only MAN 11.180/Optare Vectas H846 UUA, L834 MWT and M702 RVS, along with Wright-bodied Volvos S582-4 VOB; M702 RVS may have since been withdrawn.

Mercedes-Benz 811Ds N75 JUR and N76 KVS have been sold to Terry's, Hemel Hempstead, 709D M231 SGS is with Docklands Minibuses, Optare MetroRider J208 RVS is with Chalkwell, Sittingbourne and sister J367 BNW went to Tally Ho!, Kingsbridge as RIL 3899. Volkswagen LT55 CityPacer D81 NWW has also been sold.

Shamrock, Pontypridd

Excitement has been caused by delivery of new double-deckers V304/7/9 EAK, part of the manufacturer's stock of seatbelt-equipped Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzen DPH47/31F. They are at Abercynon.

Also new, but at Newport, are Scania L94IB/rizar C55F V305 EAK, in all-over blue with Shamrock Millennium fleetnames, and Mercedes-Benz/Olympus C16F V629 KWR in fleet livery.

Secondhand acquisitions are Leyland National 2 NL116L11/1R/B49F GWE 617/8V from Stagecoach East Midland and Newport-based, fleet-liveried Renault Master M12 R184 EBX. Leyland National GMB 669T is reinstated for further service.

Ex-Q Drive Berkhof-bodied Scania R83 HBY has been sold to Collis, Bristol and PMT-bodied Mercedes-Benz F428 EMB is another vehicle to pass to John, Bridgend. Ex-Silver Choice Jonckheere-bodied Volvo P98 VGD and Dormobile-bodied Mercedes K590 TRY have also been sold.

Shearings

Ten Volvo B10Ms with Plaxton Panther bodywork are on order.

Among the surprising homes found for Scania's stock of N113DRB double-deckers with East Lancs Cityzen bodies is Shamrock of Pontypridd which has taken three. V307 EAK was photographed in Pontypridd.
JOHN JONES

Road Car 582 (V582 XTU) is one of five Plaxton-bodied Dennis Mini Pointer Darts for Newark services.
GEOFF COXON



Skills, Nottingham

Setra T80 SMC is confirmed as numbered 17.

Acquisitions to record are Volvo B10M-62/Van Hool Alizée C53F 47-9 (N473/4/99 PYS, *SKS 982/1/4*) from Park, Hamilton and similar 71 (M830 HNS, *LSK 502*) and 72/3 (M435/42 PYS, *SKS 951/3*) from Glen, Port Glasgow. 47-9 retain parker's livery with Skills fleetnames added, but 71-3 wear CoachStyle colours.

As reported under its former owner's heading last month, Trent driver trainer Leyland Leopard PSU3/3R/Alexander Y B53F GLS 267N has been acquired for training duties here.

Caetano-bodied Toyota Optimo 70 (K770 JRA) has been re-registered JUI 9570 and Van Hool-bodied Volvo B93 (J693 LGA) is now JUI 5193. Volkswagen T4 Caravelle 2 (M150 PKL) has been renumbered 7.

Van Hool-bodied Volvos 76-8, 80-2 (BAZ 7918, 7056, 7914, 7057/8, 7912) have been sold.

Solent Blue Line

The East Lancs Lolyne-bodied Dennis Tridents are confirmed as 742-9 (T742-9 JPO).

Sovereign Bus & Coach BL

The 60 Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointers are made up of 52 10.1m B31D models for routes H10-13 and 183 at Harrow, five 9.2m B29F examples for the H17 at Harrow and three single-door 10.7m models for St Albans routes 320/342/361.

554/6/7 (V554 JBH etc) complete delivery of the 10.1m models, but contrary to earlier reports there are no 505/41/55, so the batch comprises 503/4 (T503/4 JPP) and 506-40/2-54/6/7 (V506 JBH etc). Four of the B29F models are 558-60/2 (V558 JBH etc).

Volvo B10B 108 (N108 GVS) has been badly damaged in a collision with a house. So was the house.

Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 413/5/7/8 (H413 FGS etc) have been transferred to Harrogate & District. Similar 902/93 (G902 UPP, K933 SLB) have gone to First Stop, Renfrew and 905 (G905 UPP) is with Hulleys, Baslow.

Stagecoach Busways

2212/4 (N212/4 LTN), Volvo B10M/Alexander PS, have been transferred to Bluebird.

Stagecoach Cheltenham District/Cheltenham & Gloucester/ Circle Line/Swindon & District ST

960 (V960 DDG), the Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B37F exhibited at Coach & Bus 99 and the 4,000th Alexander-bodied bus supplied to Stagecoach, has been delivered to Cheltenham District.

Acquisitions are of Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander B25F 736-8 (N644/18/43 VSS) from Cambus and now with Cheltenham & Gloucester at Cirencester (736) and Stroud (737), and Circle Line (738). Cheltenham & Gloucester Iveco 49.10s 607/8 (R607/8 KDD) and Swindon & District 613 (R613 KDD) have joined other Ivecos with Stagecoach Devon.

Circle Line has acquired Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR/Leyland H44/28F 128 (A648 THV) from Selkent.

DT10 (HIL 8410, *81 KF 02*), the fourth ex-Ministry of Defence Dodge G13/Wadham Stringer B39F driver trainer, has been allocated to Cheltenham District. The previous HIL 8410, Circle Line Dennis Javelin 1410 is E759 JAY once again. Cheltenham & Gloucester Dodge trainer DT9 (D817 OAK, *92 KF 97*) — now at Stroud — has been re-registered YJV 806. The previous holder of this mark, Leyland National 2 368, has regained its original AAE 658V registration.

The latest Dart SLFs have ousted all remaining Leyland Nationals and non low-floor Darts from Cheltenham District. The last National was 364 (AAE 648V), which has been withdrawn. The Cheltenham District fleet is now less varied than for some time with 19 Dart SLFs, 18 Mercedes-Benz 709Ds, 11 Volvo B10M-55s, three Bristol VRT/SL3s, one Leyland Olympian, plus five B10M Expressliners for National Express work.

Transfers out of Cheltenham District have seen National 2 361 and ex-London Dennis Darts 919-23 go to Swindon & District, while SLF Dart and Marshall-bodied Darts 933/6/7 have gone to Cheltenham & Gloucester's Stroud depot. Swindon & District has transferred nearly-new SLF/Alexander B37F 948 (V948 DDG) to Cheltenham & Gloucester at Gloucester.

Cheltenham & Gloucester has transferred Volvo B10M-55/Alexander 422 and Mercedes-Benz 709D 690 to Cheltenham District; Leyland Olympian 115, Nationals 307/8 and Mercedes-Benz 811D 811 have gone to Circle Line at Gloucester; and National 2 382 and 709D 699 have gone to Swindon & District.

Swindon & District has transferred National 2 391/2 and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright 813 to Circle Line.

Cheltenham & Gloucester Mercedes-Benz 709D 717 (N717 KAM) has been placed into reserve but is currently acting as a 'paint-float' vehicle covering for vehicles under repaint; reserve refurbished Leyland National 'National 3' 310 (VEU 231T) has been at work in Stroud. Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 702/3 (M702/3 EDD) are also held in reserve.

Cheltenham & Gloucester has withdrawn refurbished Leyland National 'National 3s' 305 (PHW 989S), National 2 362 (HIL 6075, *AAE 646V*), and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 677/81 (F677 PDF, G681 AAD). Circle Line has withdrawn Bristol VRT/SL3s 234, 1237 (YEL 2T, HAH 237V), National 2 1660 (AAE 660V) and Mercedes-Benz 709D 1682 (G682 AAD). Swindon & District has withdrawn National 2s 361/3 (AAE 644V; 511 OHU, *AAE 647V*), and Mercedes-Benz 709D 678 (F311 DET). 234, 1237 and 1682 passed to J. Davies (dealer), Winchcombe along with Cheltenham District Bristol VRT 209 (NWS 289R) and Cheltenham & Gloucester's 235 (HBD 9177).

Stagecoach Devon ST

Sale of convertible open-top Bristol VRT/SL3s has begun, with acquired 932-4 (UWV 605/8/9S) first to go, to Munden (dealer), Bristol.

Stagecoach East London/Selkent ST

The next 124 Alexander ALX400 H47/24D-bodied 10.5m Dennis Tridents, TA99-222, are being built to full rather than lowheight. TA99-101/5/6/8/9-15/7/8/20/1 are registered V473-5 KJN, V105/6/8/9 MEV, V476/7 KJN, V112-5/7/8/20 MEV, V478 KJN). TA123/87, 200/22 have registrations V479-82 KJN reserved for them, with matching V-MEV marks for others until W-prefixes start on 1 March.

These buses are due to be allocated in order to Plumstead (routes 96, 472 and part of 122), then Catford (199), Bow (241), Leyton (69), Upton Park (330), Stratford (30), Bromley (194) and Romford (294). Initially, they will oust the remaining L-class Leyland Olympians, then further Leyland Titans will go, with Volvo Olympians from route 53 moving on to the P3 and 177 .

The 66 Plaxton-bodied Dennis Darts are due as SLD107-72 (V107-10/73/12-20/74/22-72 MVX). Of these, SLD107-10 are 10.1m B33F models for Romford route 247. SLD111/6/7 are the first of 28 B27D 10.1m models and there also will be 34 9.3m dual-door models. Stratford will have examples for routes 100/276/309, Barking for routes 300/325 and Upton Park nominally for 376. These will release older DRL, DAL and DWL-class Darts along with a number of ex-Docklands Transit PD class for cascade to other Stagecoach fleets, including East Midland, Transit (Cleveland), Fife and Western. Indeed, DAL8 (N308 AMC) has already gone to Fife and PD424 (N424 MBW) is with East Midland, closely followed by PD416/9/26/7 (N416 MBW etc).

Optare Solo demonstrator V236 LWU has been on loan briefly at Leyton on route 230.

Upton Park now only has eight Leyland Titans, five of them permanent driver trainers and two, T613 and T797, which can be used as trainers or for service as required; open-top T512 is used mostly for training, but occasionally for service. Titan T2, now 21 years old, has just been repainted.

It is pleasing to record that the numerically last AEC Routemaster, RML2760 (SMK 760F) was treated to a full repaint into early 1970s style red with grey band and gold block fleetnames for the recent LT Museum Centenary Road Run.

The SLD-class Dennis Darts reduced DRLs to a mere three at Romford, North Street and all but one (Tesco-liveried DRL121) DRL-class Darts have gone from Barking too, as well as the last PD-class Darts from Plumstead. DRLs are back at Upton Park however and a further three (SLD32-34) have donned blue London City Airport livery for the Canning Town Shuttle service.

Olympians L120/2/6/34 (C120/2 CHM, D134 FYM) have been transferred to East Kent, while Leyland Titans T63, 80 and 1128 (HVX 770T, UJN 344V, HVX 771T) have gone to unconfirmed buyers.

Disposals are of L43, 51, 61, 70, 103 (C43 CHM etc) to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), but L80 (C80 CHM), remains in Stagecoach stock.

Stagecoach East Midland ST

Twenty-two East London/Selkent Dennis Darts are expected at Chesterfield to replace all remaining Leyland Nationals. The first arrival, at Stonegravels depot, was Plaxton-bodied PD424 (N424 MBW) and is to be joined by PD416/9/26/7 (N416 MBW etc), all new to Docklands Transit. Nationals 25, 615/7/8/25/6 (EKY 25V, EKW 615V, GWE 617/8V, LAG 188/9W)have been withdrawn.

A vehicle shortage resulted in Alexander TE-bodied Leyland Tiger 48 (B54 DWJ) and Alexander-bodied Leyland Fleetline 262 (OCU 819R) reappearing in November. Tiger 42 (A42 XHE) has also been at work in Chesterfield from reserve stock.

Town services in Chesterfield were revised on 28 November to allow for disruptions caused by the development of a new shopping complex .

Disgraced Dennis Dart 420 (P420 KWF) is back in traffic after repairs sustained when it literally passed through Castleton bus station after its accelerator system jammed recently.

Withdrawn Leyland National 2 23 (EKY 23V), Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger 183 (PJJ 4314, *UWJ 33Y*) and all remaining Bristol VRT/SL3s, 209-11/4/8/21/3/4 (JAK 209-11W, KWA 214/8W, KKY 221/3/4W), have all passed to Fleetlink (dealer), Liverpool. Mansfield depot ran VRs to the last and its first VR was none other than VRX prototype HHW 933D back in 1966 — giving this depot one of the longest associations with the type. Fleetline 260 (UWA 150S) passed to Maun, Mansfield, but 261 (UWA 151S) still awaits disposal.

Also awaiting disposal at the end of November were Tigers 36, 42 (SKY 32Y, A42 XHE); National 2 627 (NRP 580W); Volvo B10Ms 644/5 (J430/9 HDS); MCW Metroriders 903/5 (E48, 50 HFE); driver trainers 1-12/3 (YVL 599X, FTO 550V) Fleetline 263 (OCU 822R) and Leyland Leopard 412 (DWF 22V) which suffered mechanical failure.

With new owners are VRs 203/23 (EWE 203V, KKY 223W) with Marshall, Leighton Buzzard; 206 (EWE 206V) with Davies, Bettws Gwerfil Goch; 211 (JAK 211W) with Jones, Clydach; 214/8/24 (KWA 214/8W, KKY 224W) with Robinson, Stewkley and 221 (KKY 221W) with Johns, Birchgrove. National 2 22 (EKY 22V) is now with TM Travel, Staveley, 617/8 (HWE 617/8V) with Shamrock, Newport, 620/5 (GWJ 620W, LAG 188V) with Chester City (via MASS, North Anston as dealer).

Driver trainers at Chesterfield are possibly the only named examples in the country. Dodge Commando G13 1025 (E250 AKU) is *Bertie* and 1027 (D953 TWE) is *Boris*.

Readers with interests centring on the Chesterfield area in particular are recommended to subscribe to *Transpire*, the Chesterfield Bus Society's detailed and illustrated news sheets which are kindly made available to Fleet News. For details, send a stamped address envelope to Chris Corroy, 169 Hunloke Avenue, Walton, Chesterfield, S40 3EA.

Stagecoach Grimsby-Cleethorpes ST

Duple Laser-bodied Leyland Tiger 189 (PSU 764, *PYE 843Y*) is back in traffic after a period delicensed at East Midland's Stonegravels workshops.

Stagecoach Red & White ST

Several Dennis Javelins are coming into stock from Ribble, first recorded being 11SD/Plaxton Premiere C47F 957/8 (L145/51 BFV). Also joining this fleet is Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander B31F 185 (N430 WVR) from Stagecoach Manchester.

Now withdrawn are Optare MetroRider 258 (L840 MWT), Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 345/60 (M345/60 JBO), Volvo B10Ms 745/8 (A15 RBL, *B947 ASU*; YLP 528, *MSU 571Y*) and Leyland Tigers 918/20 (A17 RBL, *F311 RMH*; A20 RBL, *F604 CET*).

345/60 have been transferred to Stagecoach Devon and 748 has been sold to GHA Coaches, Wrexham, where it rejoins sister 745, 258, 745 and 918 initially went to dealers, 918 since appearing with Blue Bus, Horwich.

Optare MetroRider 256 (J797 MHF) is now with Orion, Wemyss Bay and Leyland National 658 (BPT 903S) has passed to a breaker. Long-lasting Bristol RESL6L 391 (GHB 146N) has gone to Hardwick, Barnsley (dealer). Leyland Leopard towing bus RW2 (BTX 332J), new to Rhondda Transport, has been sold for preservation to The Friends of Rhondda Heritage Park, Porth.

Stagecoach Transit ST

MAN 18.220HOC/LAlexander ALX300 B42F 666-75 (V166 DEF, V667-75 DDC) are new to Stockton and supplement 656-65 (T656-65 OEF) on services 59/60 and trunk service 36, all with Lo-liner branding. MAN 727-36 (T727-35 OEF, T736 FVN) at Hull are used on services 1 and 2 with Street Surfer branding. The vehicle originally intended as 727 was despatched to Stockton as 666 (T466 MHN), resulting in the use at Hull of similar demonstrator 7222 TMD in blue/silver livery.

Following their arrival, Volvo Olympians 823-30 (M223-7 SVN, P828-30 FEF) were transferred to Hull, where they supplement the 35 ex-Busways Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs — Northern Counties H43/30F 901/5-12/4/5/7-25/7 (E901 KYR etc) and Alexander RH H45/31F 930-43 (C630/21/32-7/43/4/9/62/4/5 LFT). All of Hull's Scania double-deckers and most Hull and Transit Dennis Dominators have been withdrawn — including the last vehicles in Hull livery (Dominators 206/9/23/8/9/31/3/52/3/6/7 and Scania N112 800). Dominators not previously recorded as withdrawn are 210/35-7/9-44/7 (B110 UAT, E135-7/9-41 SAT, F144/7 BKH); remaining Scantias withdrawn are N112DRB 800 (C100 HSJ) and N113DRB 810 (H810 WKH).

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- FG — First Group
- GA — Go-Ahead Group
- NX — National Express
- SG — Status Bus & Coach Group
- ST — Stagecoach Holdings
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

Stagecoach has transferred Leyland Olympians from Kingston upon Hull to replace Dennis Dominators and Scania's 934 (C634 LFT) has an Alexander RH body.

JOHN YOUNG

Only five Dominators have survived this slaughter — Ferrybus 232 (E132 SAT) and 248-51 (F148-51 BKH). Cascaded vehicles have also enabled the Leyland National 2 to be eliminated at Hartlepool; the last were 515/6/9 (KAJ 215W etc). Also withdrawn there were Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Falcons 527/8 (B27/8 PAJ).

Hartlepool coaches withdrawn are Volvo B10M 35 (HDZ 8683, A491 WYS, 2637 AT, A845 UGB) and Dennis Dorchester 42 (BUT 24Y). Wright-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 303/4 (HDZ 3603/4) have been withdrawn on cessation of Guisborough town services, Alexander-bodied 325 (F625 XMS) also being retired.

Dennis Darts 457-61 (P457-61 EEF) have moved to Darlington from Hartlepool. Dart SLFs 462-7 (R462-7 SEF) and Leyland Lynx 609 (F609 UVN) are at Hartlepool ex-Stockton, 462-7 being the first low-floor vehicles at Hartlepool, now with Super 6 branding for service 6 (Hart Station-Fens Estate). Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 303/4/10 (HDZ 2603 etc) have gone to Stockton from Darlington (303 going on to Hull as a staff bus and 304/10 ousting 321/4 (F621/4 XMS) to reserve fleet at Darlington; 325 F625 XMS) is also in reserve. Stockton's final two Volvo B6s, 403/8 (L103 GHN, M108 PVN) have been transferred to Darlington. Volvo B10M-55s 707-11 (M707-11 KRH) are now at Hartlepool, rendered surplus at Hull by new MANs.

The coach fleet at Hartlepool now includes former East Midland Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Excalibur C53F 32 (J422 HDS, KSU 463, J422 HDS), former Hull Leyland Swift/Reeve Burgess Harrier C37F 31 (H71 XKH) and former Cambus B10M-60/Plaxton Paramount III 3500 C53F 38 (G525 LWU).

The Handirider vehicles, Leyland National 2 60 (B60 WKH) and Dennis Lancet 61 (YAY 21Y) were sold upon expiry of their contract.

Volvo B10M 81 (P181 PRH) has been transferred to Darlington from Hull and Leyland Titan PD3/4 189 (PRX 189B, 417 DCD) is back home at Stockton after its sojourn at Hartlepool.

Leyland Fleetlines 131/3/51/2/4 (GAJ 131/3V, VEF 151/2Y, YAJ 154Y), Dominators 235-7/9/41 (E135 SAT etc), Leyland National 2s 515/6/9 (KAJ 215W etc), Falcons 527/8 (B27/8 PAJ), National 2 60 (B60 WKH), Lancet 61 (YAY 21Y) and Mercedes-Benz 709D staff bus 24 (F734 FDV) have been sold to Houston Ramm (dealer), Sudden. Fleetline 135 (GAJ 135V) and Dominators 216-20 (B216-8 OAJ, C219/20 WAJ) are also expected to go to Houston Ramm, even though 135 has been cannibalised.

Dominators 211/3/4 are with Maun, Mansfield, 234/5/7/9/41 with Stott, Oldham, while as reported last month, Houston Ramm's operational subsidiary Coachmaster has Dominators 252-7 and Scania's 800-5/12-6, Leopard 34 (FSL 62W, 6689 DO, GSL 306W) with Skelton Coaches; B10M 35 is with Gillingham Coaches, Dorchester; 42 is with Nightingale Coaches; Stanley; National 2s 215/9 are with Batley & District and 216 is with Abbey, Skelton.

Thanks to *Cleveland Transit News* and Stagecoach Transit for this month's bumper update.

Stagecoach United Counties ST

At end-October, the active Bristol VRT/SL3s in this once staunch Bristol/ECW fleet were 724/36/44, 931/7/9/41/50/62/3/5/6 (LFJ 852/65/78W, SNV 931/7W, URP 939/41W, VVV 50/62/3/5/6W) with 735, 849, 912/44/61/74 (LFJ 864W, OVV 849R, FRP 912T, URP 944W, VVV 961W, KRU 852W) withdrawn and awaiting disposal.

Stephenson, Rochford

Leyland National 2 MDS 868V has been operating in service locally, in part rubbed-down Eastern Counties livery presenting a poor appearance.

Sweyne Coaches, Swinefleet

Leyland National 2 NL116AL11/1R/B49F APT 118W is an acquisition from Arriva North East.

TM Travel, Old Tupton

Acquisitions to note are of Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F XPT 803V and APT 816W both from Arriva Northumbria, similar URP 943W from United Counties; former Harris Bus, Grays MCW Metrorider/B24F E305 EVW via Carlton (dealer), Hellaby; Leyland National 2 NL116L11/1R/B52F EKY 22V (in Unibus livery) from Stagecoach East Midland and similar FDV 830V from Coastline.

Plaxton Premiere 350 C50F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 K249 PCV has been added; it was new to Western National and arrived in allover white with red fleetnames. It is to be downseated to C48Ft. Dennis Javelin F513 RTL was sold to Kirkby Coach & Bus in part exchange.

Leyland Panther ENU 93H is no longer and psv and is not to be used as a standby vehicle; it has gone into store at MASS, North Anston.

Leyland National ABA 21T has been sold to Hardwick (dealer), Barnsley for scrap.

Tellings-Golden Miller SG

Orders call for nine new Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs for routes H20/H26, seven Alexander ALX300-bodied Volvo B10BLEs for route 726, to be followed by five more Darts for route S3. Eight Plaxton Paragon and two Panther coaches are on order.

Thompson, Kimberworth

Former Barton DAF MB230/Plaxton Paramount 3200 III C53F D641 WNU has been recorded here.

Travel West Midlands

Volvo B7L/Plaxton President low-floor double-decker 4077 (V477 MOV) was noted on delivery on 16 December.

Most of the Leyland Lynxes transferred to Dundee have been returned.

Travel Wright, Newark

Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F S32 JBA is a new delivery, following sister Vario S577 BFE.

New for coaching activities is Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-62 T707 SUT.

Trent Buses

99 (V109 LVH) is the Mercedes-engined Optare Excel 2 L1180 demonstrator which was exhibited at Coach & Bus 99 with false registration V199 DRC; it has been at work on Rainbow route R1.

Confirmation of seating capacities not previously given are that Optare Excel L1150s 173-200 are all B45F, Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2s 275-99 are B31F, Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2s 937-44 are B41F and 945-9 are B40F.

Unity Coaches, Clayworth

Acquisitions are Mercedes-Benz 709D/Marshall B23F L99, 999 ABC from ABC Travel, Ainsdale and Scania K113CRB/Irizar Century C49Ft RJ1 8861 (L502 YFE) from Appleby, Conisholme.

Plaxton-bodied Bristol LH UFX 628X is thought to have been sold.



Virgin Bus, Oadby

In stock are Leyland National 11351A/1R/B45F NIL 2985 from Black Prince, Morley, DAF-engined 11351A/1R/B50F MIL 7621 (TOE 523N) from Arriva North West, National 2 NL116L11/1R/B52F DMS 21V from Fife Scottish, similar but B44D YOT 545V from Leask & Silver, Lerwick, along with Volkswagen LT55/Optare CityPacer B21F E555 GFR ex-Greatley, Warminster.

Leyland National 11351/1R/SC/DP48F NIL 2984 (GLJ 674N) is in stock, but withdrawn.

Wallace Arnold

Eight new Plaxton Paragon-bodied coaches are due as well as two Plaxton Panthers.

Confirmation of the T-prefix new stock is that this comprised Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton Premiere 350 C46FT 501-25 (T501-25 EUB) and similar, but C48FT 526-51 (T526-51 EUB).

Two old staggers in Ireland are Duple-bodied Leyland Leopard XWX 180S now 78 DL 681 with Lough Swilly and Plaxton-bodied Leopard PNW 345W now 81 DL 488 which has just passed from North West Busways to Maiden City Tours of Londonderry for spares.

Walsh, Halifax

Further Ford Transits added to stock are Dormobile B20F-bodied TJ10 (C600 NPU) ex-Blackwell, Abbess Roding and new to Eastern National; similarly-bodied F345 ONO ex-Oare of Brynford and H657 XUM, for which details are minimal.

TJ10 is re-registered B10 TJW, the previous TJ10 (B10 TJW, E93 OUH), a Freight Rover Sherpa, being withdrawn.

Warrington Borough Transport

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer MPD B29F demonstrator V680 FPB has been in use, mainly on services in the Penketh area, rubbing shoulders with the usual MetroRiders.

Vehicles repainted in the now-discontinued red/ivory livery are Dennis Darts 1-8 and 217/28/9/32-4/40/5/8, Olympians 37-49 and 85-87, Dominators 81, 82, 91, 96 and 102, Metroriders 122/3 and Dodge 204. Repaints continue in the former red/white.

Retained Bristol RE 72 (LED 72P) is now attired for its new driver training role with slogans 'Training the bus drivers of the future' and 'Driver in training' in its former indicator display. Sisters 70/3 (LED 70/3P) remained at the depot in early December, but 71 (LED 71P) is thought sold.

Watford & District Motor Services

This operator has reappeared and works a number of former London Traveller routes in South Hertfordshire from a new base at Park Street, near St Albans.

Former West Midlands MCW Metrobuses GOG 233/8/45W, former Greater Manchester Metrobus SND 145X, former London & Country Leyland National KPA 379W, former Maidstone & District Leyland Leopard CKE 170Y and former Eastern National Leyland Olympian coach B689 BPU are in stock.

London Traveller Metrobuses MRJ 47, 54W, ORJ 76W and Leyland Nationals UPB 352S, YPL 442T and YPF 765T are expected here too.

West Sussex County Council

Former Go-Ahead North East Leyland Atlantean AUP 336W is at work on schools services, still in Go-Ahead colours, and based at Drayton depot near Chichester.

Wilfreda-Beehive, Adwick-le-Street

Exciting arrivals are brand new East Lancs Cityzen-bodied Scania N113DRBs V320/30 EAK. Both were placed into service on schools work on the day of their delivery.

A new Irizar Century 12.35 C49Ft-bodied Scania L94IB has been delivered after exhibition at Coach & Bus 99.

Wilts & Dorset

The current delivery of new Optare Solo/B30F is completed by receipt of 2671-86 (V671-86 FEL), displacing further MCW Metroriders to reserve fleet, this time 2301/20/46-50/62/8-70/4/5/9/82; 2360 was also added to reserve following earlier examples. Salisbury has 2671/2, Poole 2673-6, Ringwood 2677-80, Lymington 2681-5 and Blandford 2686.

Wilts & Dorset is notable in having the largest fleet of Solos, with 86 at work from five batches as 2601-86. W&D also has the biggest fleet of Spectra double-deckers too, with 53 as 3101-47/54-6/8-60.

Yellow Buses, Bournemouth

The new Dennis Tridents have transponders which allow 'real-time' information to be displayed at stops on Winton services 3, 4, 5/5A and 6 which have already apparently proved commercially successful.

Yorkshire Terrier YT

11 East Lancs Myllennium-bodied DAF SB220GS are on order for spring delivery to Ecclesfield depot.

After accident damage, Volvo B6 2201 (M201 EUS) has been repainted in yellow/green Yorkshire Terrier colours.

Leyland Tiger 304 (A159 EPA) has been transferred to Road Car.

A mass clearout of withdrawn Leyland Nationals from Holbrook has seen the despatch of 1, 23, 40/2/3, 65 and 1818 to Wigley, Carlton (dealer) for scrap and also of 6, 22 and 56-8 (to unconfirmed buyers).

Yorkshire Traction YT

Twelve Volvo B6BLEs are due as 133-44, mostly for Raymarsh, by the time these notes are read. Their underframes were noted on delivery to East Lancs on 27 October last.

Mercedes-Benz O.404/Hispano Vita demonstrator R690 RGM remained on loan for longer than expected pending the arrival of new 45. Also on loan here have been similar S340 MOJ and Solero demonstrator S795 XUG.

Volvo B10M-55/East Lancs DPH49/31F 904 (E737 HFW) is now back in service after refurbishment and retains high-back seating unlike 902 (E735 HFW).

Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Darts 430-3 (N430-2 CHL) are reallocated to Huddersfield and their rear numeral displays have been painted out.

Leyland Olympian 634 (A634 WDT) has been out of traffic for repairs following major accident damage after it hit a house.

A shortage of vehicles has led to the appearance of Barnsley & District vehicles on Yorkshire Traction work, ex-Traction Leyland Nationals 114/5 (YWG 461/4T) having been noted.

Courtesy of the West Yorkshire Metro Transport News, allocations of the two bases serving West Yorkshire have the following vehicles:

Huddersfield: Leyland National 2s 213/22/30/1/4/6/7/9/41/5-7, Scania K93CRBs 265-9/75-9, Darts 430-2, Leyland Olympians 625/33/6-9/64/6/7/70/2 and MCW Metrobuses 705/7-9/16;

Shafton: Leyland National s 235, Scania L113CRLs 290/3/4, Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 301/7/9-13/5-8/20/91-3, Metroriders 322/6/7, Darts 415/22-6 and Olympians 601/7-10/2/23/4/7/42/7/8/53-5/61-3.

Yorkshire Travel, Dewsbury

Leyland National 21 (YPL 383T) has been withdrawn and is now with Patterson, Seahouses.

Youngs Coaches, Kilcot

Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/38R/Plaxton Paramount 3500 LIB 7134 (A586 WNY) is in stock from Tim's Travel, Queensborough but new to Hills of Tredegar.

Ex-Dix of Gloucester Mercedes-Benz L608D/PMT C21F C590 NRM is also at work, but MCW Metrorider E811 ETN is out of use.



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Coachmasters, the bus operating business of dealer Houston Ramm, has put 17 of Stagecoach Kingston upon Hull's surplus Scania N-Series and Dennis Dominator double-deckers on to its Greater Manchester PTE school contracts and service 456 (Rochdale-Wigan). C100 HSJ, seen in Wigan, is an East Lancs-bodied Scania N112DRB new to A1 Service and transferred to Hull after Stagecoach bought A1 in 1995.

HOWARD WILDE

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Reports to be sent, please, to **Sandy Macdonald**,
12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow
G41 4AF, to reach him by 14 January for the
April issue.

Abbott, Loanhead

Jonckheere C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N804 NHS was acquired in November, having been last used by Whitelaw, Stonehouse; it was immediately re-registered 2767 WF. Jonckheere C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 2767 WF (*BBD 854X*) was sold to Volvo Coach Sales (dealer), Loughborough in exchange but its new registration is not known.

Arriva Scotland West AA

MPV1 (V502 DTY) is the new Ford Tourneo GLX which arrived in November, painted all-over white, for the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Bishopton Train Taxi service. Other additions in November comprised Dormobile B29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 331/2 (K132 XRE, K154 BRF), previously Arriva Southern Counties 132/54; and MCW H43/28D-bodied MCW Metrobus DR101/14 959 (KYV 734X), previously Arriva London North M734. 331/2 have been allocated to Inchinnan depot while 959 is at Barrhead. Further arrivals in December were 798/9 (V711/2 NGD), two of three new Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs due for the former ClydeCoaster Greenock-Ayr service; 194 (P61 XTN), a B31F Optare MetroRider previously Arriva Northumbria 901, now being used from Inchinnan depot; and 334 (K150 BRF), a Wright NimBus B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D previously Arriva Midlands North 150.

While 334 entered service carrying an advertising livery for Lockyear Audi applied by its previous owner and Arriva livery on its front, 194 and 798/9 are in full corporate colours as are Optare MetroRider 200, Scania L113 520 and Volvo Citybuses 949/52. Alexander H45/30D-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68C/1Rs GSC 642/3X were also on loan from Lothian during November and, like the others reported last month, were used from Barrhead depot on school contracts.

Alexander-bodied Dodge S56 318 (D318 SDS) and Reeve Burgess-bodied Renault S56 369 (G199 NWY) are with Horsburgh, Pumphreston.

Austin, Earlston

Iveco 49.10 L846 HMS was sold to Horsburgh, Pumphreston in August.

Caber, Aberfeldy

R971 XBC, an LDV Convoy with M16 body, was purchased from MacArthur, Pitlochry in November.

Christie, Alloa

Neoplan Skyliner R276 THL was re-registered XSU 977 in November.

Cityliner, Port Glasgow

N238/9 HWX are Plaxton C48Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62s acquired in November ex-Wallace Arnold Coaches. Similar S463/4 JGB were repainted into Scottish Citylink livery at that time.

Clan (Skye-Ways), Kyle of Lochalsh

12 EWO, a C49Ft Bova FHD12-330, was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in November.

Clyde Coast, Ardrossan

GIL 5407 (*D555 MVR*), a Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 previously with Gilchrist Coaches, East Kilbride, joined the fleet last June.

Clydewide, Lanark

From 28 November, this taxi operator took over the provision of SPT subsidised, demand-responsive service 451/2 in the Lesmahagow area. This pre-bookable service is available on Mondays to Saturdays and was previously contracted to MacFarlane, Lesmahagow.

Coakley, Motherwell

More new buses arrived in October and November comprising Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs V400, 700, 800 CBC and Marshall Master-bodied Mercedes-Benz O.814D V600 CBC. A further new arrival in December was V10 CBC, a Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D. These bring the total number of buses which have entered service with V-registrations to nine.

Buses in this fleet have started to carry rear adverts depicting the difference between 1995 (more First Glasgow buses than Coakley buses) and 2000 (more Coakley buses than First Glasgow buses) under the headline 'Spot the difference now, John?'. This is in response to First Glasgow timetables produced in 1998 showing daytime (both First Glasgow and Coakley buses) and night-time (only First Glasgow buses) under a 'Spot the difference' heading.

More new services started on 14 December to compete with First Glasgow were half-hourly (hourly on Sundays) 62 (Motherwell Cross-Glasgow, Cathedral Street) and hourly, Monday to Saturday X11 (Holytown, Monument-Glasgow, Sauchiehall Street).

MCW Metrorider F57 RFS was sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall last year for scrap.

Collison, Stonehouse

Reeve Burgess-bodied Leyland Swift UBM 880 (*F36 TMP*) was sold to Mitchell, Plean in November.

Dart, Paisley

Leyland National 2 N17 (MDT 265W, KWA 21W) was sold to Mitchell, Plean in October.

Davidson, Bathgate

Plaxton Pointer B36F-bodied Dennis Dart SLF T51 JBA had been returned to Mistral (dealer), Knutsford by September.

Hourly Monday to Saturday service D87 (Whitburn, West End-Livingston bus station) was due to start on 10 January.

Docherty, Irvine

D516 DSX is another Alexander P-type B61F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH which arrived in November. It was previously Stagecoach Fife 416. R955 AMB is a Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D obtained on loan from Mistral (dealer), Knutsford in December to provide cover for the return of the four similar vehicles acquired recently, while they underwent repairs.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 L975 KDT was re-registered VST 915 in November. Further to the June issue, the new Bova coach is T423 TGA, not T432 RGA as previously reported; in December, this vehicle was fitted with the new Magiq style of front end which will not generally be available on new Bovas until around March.

Leyland Leopards CSF 158W and NFS 172Y, with Alexander Y-type and T-type bodywork respectively, were sold to Tiger Coaches (dealer), Salsburgh in November without being used — despite being repainted into the blue and white livery. The reason for this seemingly strange move is that pupil numbers had increased on certain school transport contracts, requiring the use of double-deckers and rendering these vehicles surplus to requirements.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus TSD 285 is used regularly on specific journeys on the recently-introduced Irvine-Kilmarnock service, complete with a conductress. Other vehicles used on this service (without a conductress) include Leyland National RRA 221X, Wright-bodied Renault S75 HDZ 5455, and Alexander-bodied Renault S56 E814 JSX.

Dunn, Port Glasgow

A new service between Port Glasgow, Devol and Gourrock, Faulds Park was started on 16 December; it provides three return journeys on Mondays to Fridays.

Dunnachie, Craighouse

The Jura Bus Service, previously run by Charlie McLean, is now operated by his son-in-law Alex Dunnachie. S617 HGD, an LDV Convoy with Coachlines M16 bodywork, was acquired about a year ago.

Dunnet, Keiss

Confirmation is only now available about the vehicles involved when control of the Dunnet's Motors business passed to Sutherland, Wick in November 1998. They comprised Plaxton-bodied Bedford YMT YWK 2S; Willowbrook-bodied Leyland Leopards GGM 96W, LCY 101X; Plaxton-bodied Leopards BVA 789V, CJE 452V; Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tigers VAV 257/8X, FAV 565Y, LIL 9664 (*FAV 564Y*), HUI 4566 (*FAV 566Y*), RIW 9067 (*FAV 567Y*), B352 WNG (*PIJ 4317*, *B909 RVF*); Devon Conversions-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D KAZ 2065 (*D968 OSU*); and Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814D H285 BJS. As previously reported, three Mercedes-Benz vehicles were subsequently purchased by Sutherland for the fleet — Onyx-bodied 609D P166 LSC, Adamson-bodied 711D P611 RGB and Adamson-bodied 609D P612 RGB.

It appears that only BVA 789V, CJE 452V, GGM 96W, LCY 101X, VAV 257X, H285 BJS, P166 LSC, and P611/2 RGB passed to the Rapson Group. Of these, GGM 96W and LCY 101X were quickly scrapped.

Earnside, Glenfarg

The latest vehicle to join this fleet is A626 BCN, an MCW H46/31F-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/43 which arrived last year ex-Go Gateshead 3626. It replaced East Lancs-bodied Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR NOC 729R which had left the fleet by December.

Edinburgh Airport

Six of Arriva Bus & Coach's Northern Counties B30D-bodied DAF SB220GS buses were obtained for airport duties last year comprising 1, 3 (R972/1 FNW) ex-Airlinks 972/1 which arrived in February; 2, 4 (R983/75 FNW) which followed in June ex-Apcoa, Sunbury; and 5, 6 (R982/7 FNW) which arrived in October ex-Capital, West Drayton.

EVE Coaches, Dunbar

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 K918 RGE had been re-registered K10 EVE by November.

Fairline, Glasgow

J209 NNC, a Van Hool C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-60, was purchased last year from Grangeburn, Motherwell and subsequently re-registered XIW 1182.

First Aberdeen FG

Toyota Optimo 045 (K67 HAS) has been re-registered 542 GRT. This mark has previously been on a Grampian MCW Metroliner, a Volvo B10M, FirstGroup chief executive Moir Lockhead's own car, and latterly on a First Leicester vehicle.

Festive Light Tours were operated on 16, 23 December to help the Aberdeen public to enjoy the many illuminated displays throughout the city. These tours left Broad Street at 17.15, 18.15 and 19.15, using open-top Leyland Atlantean 022. This bus normally carries branding for the summer Granite City Circular Tour but this was changed to Christmas Lights Circular Tour although the rest of the summer branding was retained.



Dart Buses recently acquired three Optare Delta-bodied DAF SB220s from London United's Westlink subsidiary for use on its commuter services into Glasgow. S23 (G934 MYG) was Westlink DA6. BILLY NICOL

METROLINE'S FIRST YEAR IN SCOTLAND

In October, Metroline reported on its first full year of trading after incorporation of the Scottish Citylink operation, and expressed its gratitude for the efforts of staff, agents and contractors for the progress they have made.

During the year, a strategy was implemented for future brand development and revenue growth by investing in new systems. A new internet website was opened in August which includes a journey planner, encompassing rail and ferry timetables in addition to those of Citylink to provide the planning of integrated transport opportunities. Further developments planned include a fully operational e-commerce facility by the end of 2000 to enable the sale of tickets via the internet, and this will be coupled to a reservations system for customers' peace of mind.

An improved specification was introduced for all new vehicle purchases, aimed at strengthening brand awareness for current and prospective customers. By the year end, one-third of the fleet had been replaced or refurbished to the new standard.

Over 2.2 million passengers were carried, good growth having been achieved on commuter operations despite continuing competition from low-cost operators. The Irish service also saw strong growth, although passenger volumes on trunk and rural routes were down slightly. Overall, average fare yields improved by 2% and average operating profit per mile improved by 4%. The operating margin of £1.2 million reflected a satisfactory return on sales of 10.5%.

SKYE-WAYS TAKES ON CITYLINK

At the start of the Scottish Citylink winter season in October, Clan Garage (Kyle) Ltd suffered a serious blow when its Skye-Ways operation failed to retain the Citylink contracts which it had held for some years. The company had provided Portree-Inverness and Portree-Glasgow services, but before gaining the contracts Skye-Ways had competed with Citylink on these routes.

Following the loss of the Citylink work to Rapson's Coaches and Park's of Hamilton, Skye-Ways laid off a third of its workforce and closed its Inverness office although the latter move had been planned for a while. It was said at the time, however, that the company hoped to make an announcement which might see some of the redundant staff being employed again. In November it became clear that competition with Citylink was to restart.

From 20 December, Skye-Ways returned to long-distance coach operation in its own right, with daily services introduced between Portree and Inverness, Portree and Glasgow, and Glasgow to Gourock. At present one return trip is being offered on each route, all in direct competition with Citylink.

DUNNET'S COACHES SELLS OUT

On 1 December, as reported briefly last month, the Rapson Group expanded yet again by purchasing the old-established business of Dunnet's Motors of Keiss, whose 20 staff operated 12 coaches on local services from Wick to Berriedale and Thurso. Dunnet's also operated contracted services on behalf of Highland Council, together with various local employers including Rolls-Royce and Norfrost. All staff were offered employment with Rapson's Highland Country bus operation, although the Dunnet premises were not included in the deal.

Dunnet had introduced motorbus services by the 1920s and for many years the firm's traditional route was between Wick and John o' Groats. Traffic levels warranted the use of double-deckers in the 1950s, and these returned again in the 1980s to cater for school transport requirements.

Deregulation brought expansion on to other routes mainly through competitive tendering for subsidised services such as Wick-Thurso and Wick-Berriedale. In July 1992, the John o' Groats and Thurso routes passed to Highland Bus & Coach along with several buses, and other tendered services passed to Morrison of Castletown soon afterwards, but the Berriedale route was continued.

In November 1998, control of Dunnet's Motors passed from the Dunnet family to another local bus operator, Sutherland of Wick, although a member of the family continued as the company's traffic manager.

Early in 1999, Dunnet was awarded a contract to run buses between Wick and a BT call centre in Thurso, in Highland Country territory. This brought about an element of competition, with fares reductions and timetable changes introduced by Highland Country on the Wick-Berriedale route where the two firms competed. Although little changed initially in December, rationalisation will no doubt be achieved quickly under Rapson Group management.



An ex-Ribble Duple-bodied Leyland Leopard on Gibson's Moffat-Dumfries service in February 1995.

ALAN MILLAR

GIBSON BOWS OUT OF LOCAL SERVICES

At the end of December, James Gibson & Sons of Moffat gave up running commercial local bus services, bringing to a close 80 years of service to the rural communities between Dumfries and Moffat.

The firm started off in 1919 with a pioneering service between Dumfries and the village of St Ann's but during the 1920s this was extended to Moffat. This route, started in a deregulated era, has been continued ever since through regulation and subsequent deregulation, and has been operated on a commercial basis throughout. Few bus operators can boast a record of this kind.

A Moffat-Lanark service was provided briefly on behalf of Strathclyde PTE, but the company has generally not opted to provide subsidised local bus services in Dumfries & Galloway since the opportunity arose under the Transport Act 1985.

The decision to pull out of commercial bus services follows the loss of certain school contracts, and the fact that the relatively new Stagecoach Western Dumfries-Glasgow service has taken some of the local traffic, despite considerable customer loyalty to the established operator.

Gibson was the last traditional, colourful independent to use the Whitesands country bus terminus in Dumfries. For many years, its red and maroon buses contrasted with the brown and yellow ones of Carruthers of New Abbey, the green and white used by Clark of Glencaple and the different reds and creams of the larger operators, Caledonian Omnibuses and Western SMT.

Provision of the commercial routes from Dumfries to Moffat and to Ae Village passed to Stagecoach Western at the beginning of January. Gibson is to continue in business doing coaching and contract work, and schooldays-only journeys between Dumfries and Ae will be registered.

A NEW STAR IS BORN

Compensating to some extent for the loss of Gibson's long-established services, a new local bus operator appeared in the same area at the beginning of the year. White Star Motors has been set up by David Garnett, previously with OK Motor Services of Bishop Auckland and briefly with A1 Service of Ardrossan, but latterly the proprietor of ABC Travel of Southport which was sold to CMT Travel of Aintree nearly a year ago.

White Star Motors' official address is Sentinel House, Milton Lane, Burgh by Sands, Carlisle, but the operating centre is County Garage, High Street, Lockerbie. The name commemorates an earlier White Star Motors which ran through Burgh by Sands on the Carlisle-Bowness on Solway route, but sold out to Ribble Motor Services in March 1931.

The new company has successfully tendered to operate Dumfries & Galloway subsidised service 382 (Carlisle-Lockerbie-Moffat), previously run by Stagecoach Western. Under the new five-year contract, which began on 3 January, the service has been enhanced to offer about 10 return journeys on Mondays to Saturdays and a third of that number on Sundays.

A livery of dark blue and white has been adopted for the fleet. Four buses are required to operate the route and three new 29-seat Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts had been delivered in time for the start of the contract. A 37-seat Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dart SLF was hired pending delivery of a similar new vehicle expected during January, and a former London General Optare MetroRider completes the initial fleet.

and gave the impression that the service ran half-hourly. Festive decorations last used around 1986 were applied on the sides, and on the front was an illuminated 'Greetings' display incorporating the Aberdeen Corporation coat of arms — last used on Daimler CVG66s in the 1960s. This bus was also used as a sales bus in the city centre during the weeks before Christmas, and lost most of its downstairs seating for this role.

The traditional illuminated Christmas displays appeared on buses earlier than usual this year, with Atlanteans 341/3-5 and Leyland Olympian 116 sporting them by 29 November. Owing to their age, however, they were not normally used in the dark so their illuminations were not displayed to maximum advantage.

To counteract the fresh image of Stagecoach Bluebird's newly-delivered MAN low-floor buses on services 216/7 which pass through the suburb of Woodend, the elderly double-deck buses on services 14/15 (Balgownie Drive-Kingswells) and 15/14 (Footdee-Woodend) have been largely replaced on Mondays to Fridays by low-floor Scania L94UBs transferred from Gold Service work, and Dennis Dart SLFs on Sundays. Double-deckers are generally used now only on Saturdays.

First Edinburgh FG

278 (S778 RNE), a Dennis Dart SLF with Plaxton Pointer bodywork, entered service from Westfield depot in December on C3 (Newhaven-Kinnaird Park-Whitecraig). It is in all-over white with no fleetnames and is presumably on loan.

Leyland Tigers 349/50 and Leyland Olympian 949 have been repainted into the First Edinburgh livery. Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobus 893 appeared in service in November repainted into these colours but applied in the same style as used in the corporate 'Barbie' livery. It was followed in December by Olympian 960 and Ailsa 1053. Further to the report last month, Wright-bodied Scania 508 has been refurbished internally to corporate specification.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Scania K113 2106 (M106 PKS) was re-registered HSU 273 in November.

Scania L94s 4, 5 (V134/5 ESC) have been transferred to First Leeds.

First Glasgow FG

Articulated bus operation began on 5 December when almost half of the vehicles on service 62 were replaced by Wright Fusion AB55D-bodied Volvo B10LAs AV1-10 (V601-10 GGB). They are in corporate livery and are allocated to Parkhead depot for use exclusively on that route.

SS116-21 (V116-20/2 FSF) are the latest Scania L94UBs with Wright Access Flioline bodywork; they were new in November and also entered service in corporate livery from Parkhead depot. Further to the December issue, Scania L113s SS111-5 entered service from Parkhead rather than Knightswood.

Volvo Olympian V053, de-roofed in September, returned to service in November with its roof repaired.

Alexander TS-bodied Dennis Dorchesters SD12/5 (A102/5 RGE) were transferred to First Mainline in September, for conversion into school buses and onward sale to Kent County Council. Another batch of vehicles sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in November comprised Alexander-bodied Ailsa B55-10 A14 (CSU 222X); similar Marshall-bodied A118 (A484 UYS); Alexander TC-bodied Dorchesters CD92/3 (A202/3 UYS); similar Alexander TE-bodied CD286-90 (A106-10 UYS); similar Alexander TS-bodied SD11/3 (A101/3 RGE); Optare MetroRider GM63 (H844 UUA); ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/1Rs LO12/4 (CGG 835/7X), LO31/2, 41 (KGG 151/2/61Y); Alexander-bodied Olympian ONLXB/1R LO126 (A984 FLS); and Alexander TS-bodied Leyland Tiger TRBLXB/2RH ST344 (A24 VDS).

The entire Overground network was operated for about five hours on Christmas Day, while 24-hour routes 12 (Rutherglen-Auchinairn), 41 (Easterhouse-Drumchapel) and 62 (Faileys-Baillieston) ran hourly throughout the day.

First Stop, Renfrew

G902 UPP and K393 SLB, Mercedes-Benz 709Ds with B23F bodywork by Reeve Burgess and Plaxton respectively, were acquired in October ex-Sovereign Bus & Coach 902/93.

Forrester, Tighnabruaich

Mellor C16F-bodied Ford Transit C209 PAO had been sold by last June.

Galson, Barvas

Plaxton C57F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU5B/4R GS29 (TRY 51S) and Van Hool C46F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 GS45 (OJE 533) were sold last September. The latter went to Bradshaw, Heywood.

Gillen, Port Glasgow

Marshall B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M8 JPT was acquired in November ex-Walsh, Middleton.

Glasgow Citybus

H153/8 NON are two more Carlyle B28F bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDLs in this fleet; they were previously London United DT153/8. With reference to the January issue, H152 MOB rather than H152 NON, is owned.

Goosecroft, Denny

MCW Metrorider F52 RFS and Sparshatt-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D RBZ 5495 (D83 UVF) were sold to Ramm (dealer), Sudden last July and November respectively. Hourly Monday to Friday service 195 (Denny circular via Falkirk, Langlands and Hallglen) started on 6 December.

Hall, Kennoway

Leyland National AVJ 95T arrived in November, as did Alexander C45F-bodied Bedford YRQ BFS 471L, previously with non-PSV Arbuckle, Luthrie. The YRQ was new in 1972 as Eastern Scottish ZC471 and is to be preserved.

Harte, Greenock

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D P938 YSB was re-registered IIB 1618 about a year ago and, together with similar Reeve Burgess-bodied IIB 5213, now sports eye-catching stainless steel wheel inserts. All vehicles in this fleet have been repainted into the revised livery incorporating more orange.

Highland Heritage, Dalmally

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62s R778/90 WSB are named *Clan MacDonald* and *Clan MacNab* respectively.

Horsburgh, Pumphreston

More buses have joined this fleet in recent months including Roe H43/30F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68B/1R KPJ 281W ex-Horsham Buses (Arriva) AN281; Alexander B25F-bodied Dodge S56 D318 SDS ex-Arriva Scotland West 318; and Reeve Burgess B23F-bodied Renault S56 G199 NWW also ex-Arriva 369. L849 HMS, a C19F-bodied Iveco 49.10 last with Austin, Earliston, was also re-acquired last August; it was previously owned between 1993 and 1998.

Hunter, Sauchie

This firm purchased the business of Gray, Clackmannan in November. The vehicles involved were Jonckheere C53F-bodied DAF SB2300 A595 JSA (*OIW 5800, A124 SNH, NIL 999, A124 SNH*); Devon Conversions M9-bodied Renault Master D889 SGG; Alexander B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D190 VRP; similar Whittaker C21F-bodied E728 XHL; Reeve Burgess C23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D E693 UCY; Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 611D P234 OSF; and Plaxton C32F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814D R738 EGD. D190 VRP and E693 UCY are out of use.

Hutchison, Overtown

Hourly Monday to Saturday express service X11 (Glasgow, Buchanan bus station-West Crindledyke) was started on 13 December.

Irvine, Law

P698 HND, a Plaxton Beaver B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814, joined this fleet some time ago but was involved in a serious accident near Forth in November; L89 NSF, a Mercedes-Benz 709D with Alexander (Belfast) B25F body previously with Robson, Thornaby, was obtained on loan as a temporary replacement.

Kirkpatrick, Banchory FG

Renault S56 910 (E467 JSG) has become a mobile caravan in the Montrose area.

Kiwi, Newton Stewart

Ian and Jan Allison, trading as Kiwi Luxury Travel, began two Monday to Saturday subsidised services for Dumfries & Galloway Council on 3 January. They comprise two return journeys between Kirkcudbright and Dalbeattie via Palnackie, and one return journey between Kirkcudbright and Newton Stewart.

Lafferty, Glenboig

V477 FSF, a Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D with Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F body, was new at the beginning of December.

Leask, Lerwick

This was one of the operators involved in the provision of a free Park-&-Ride service for the Cutty Sark Tall Ships Race from 9-12 August. A five-minute frequency service ran between an 800-vehicle car park in the former Shell pipeline yard at the north end of Lerwick and Holmsgarth Quay/Alexandra Wharf between 07.30 and midnight on each of the four days, together with a less frequent and extensive service from another Park-&-Ride site at Anderson High School at the south end of the town. Other operators participating included Isbister, Walls, Robinson & Morrison, Weisdale; and Shalder Coaches.

Lianne, Renfrew

A 20-minute frequency Monday to Saturday service between Paisley town centre and Foxbar was due to start at the end of December.

Liddell, Auchinleck

Various double-deck buses joined the fleet last year. Alexander H49/37F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R AVK 160V was acquired last summer ex-Stagecoach Busways 340; similar VCU 310T and AVK 167V arrived in October ex-Stagecoach Midland Red 977/85; Willowbrook H44/31F-bodied Dennis Dominator DD129 FKM 304V was ex-Maun, Sutton-in-Ashfield in August; and Alexander H45/34F-bodied Dominator DD137B TYS 272W also arrived in August ex-Eastham Garage, Eastham.

Lippen, Johnstone

T546 HNH, a Dennis/Plaxton B29F Mini Pointer Dart, was on loan in November.

Long, Salsburgh

N494 ONS is the third Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo coach painted into M8 Motorvator livery in October.

Lothian

As reported in last month's News section, orders have been placed for a further 50 Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents, comprising 42 dual-door examples, four single-door for Airlink work, and four to open-top configuration for tour work.

The latest Plaxton H49/26D-bodied Tridents to enter service in November comprised 520/1/5/8-31/3-6 (V520/1/5/8-31/3-6 ESC), all at Marine Garage principally for services 26/A, 69, X85 and X86. Similar 501-17 are at Central Garage for service 44, together with H47/27F-bodied 539-45 for Airlink duties.

Alexander ALX400-bodied Dennis Tridents 502/3 have had their rear panels (including the top deck window) painted cherry red for mega-rear advertising for Ridcard season tickets. The gold squares from the side panels have been continued round the rear for continuity with the rest of the livery.

Airlink-liveried Volvo Olympian 432 is H49/25F in its new guise with additional luggage space.

A dispute about drivers' pay and conditions has delayed the entry into service of Plaxton Super Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 151-75, none of which had been used by mid-December.

Plaxton Prestige-bodied, LPG-powered DAF SB220GG demonstrator R29 GNW returned briefly for a second visit on 7/8 December to operate a free shuttle service between the city centre and the Edinburgh International Conference Centre for an Environmental Friendly debate. It carried appropriate window stickers for the event. Further to the January issue, it has been confirmed that Wright-bodied Scania demonstrator S350 SET operated almost entirely on route 87/88 during its visit.

Leyland Atlanteans 642/3 were also loaned to Arriva Scotland West during November, in addition to those already reported. All Atlanteans had officially been withdrawn by early-December although six few were retained and spruced up for the Atlantean farewell day (see page 24) on 3 January.

A notable policy change here is that redundant buses no longer have to be sold for scrap; arrangements have been made with Houston Ramm (dealer), Sudden for the disposal of 30 or more Atlanteans for further use, some having been converted to single-door layout.

It is reported that Airlink service 100 is to be extended from Waverley to Holyrood via East Market Street, Jeffrey Street, St Mary Street and Holyrood Road, with Edinburgh City Council promoting parking restrictions in Jeffrey Street and St Mary Street to allow this to happen. This would re-introduce Lothian buses to Holyrood Road after an absence of several years.

The Day Saver ticket offered even better value on December Sundays when two adults travelling together and purchasing a Day Saver could travel for the price of one. The 'Coach plus Bus' ticket is a recent joint initiative with Scottish Citylink whereby, for a small extra charge, Citylink passengers travelling to Edinburgh can purchase either a Lothian single or Day Saver ticket from their coach driver and exchange this for the correct ticket from a Lothian driver. This arrangement is not valid on Airlink, night buses, Britannia X50 services, Classic Tours or day tours.

McCreadie, Airdrie

NIL 8257 (SND 453X), a Leyland Atlantean AN68/1R with Northern Counties H43/32F body, was purchased in September ex-Mayne, Manchester. Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 L637 AYS (LSK 876) followed in October ex-Messenger, Aspatria.

McDade, Uddingston

Northern Counties H43/31F-bodied Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR YAJ 154Y was acquired in October ex-Stagecoach Transit 154.

MacDonald, Cumbernauld

HIL 5835 is a Caetano-bodied Volvo coach acquired last July ex-Garnett, Tinsdale Crescent.

MacEwan, Amisfield

H139 UUA, a B26F Optare MetroRider previously London Central MRL139, was acquired last February; together with similar H138/40 UUA, it had been converted to B31F by August. Another acquisition in August was UCK 500 (RBO 194M), a 1974 Leyland Leopard PSU4B/4R with 1989 Willowbrook Warrior B47F body previously Davies, Pencader 171.

McKindless, Wishaw

Carlyle Dartline B28F-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDLs H76, 84 MOB are another two examples of their type to join this fleet, having previously been London United DT76, 84.

Further to last month's report, similar G52 TGW has been re-registered RIL 9306; H84 MOB is the vehicle now carrying registration RIL 9304. All other Darts have been re-registered too, and are now RIL 9404/10 (H76 MOB, G51 TGW), RIL 9654/64 (G54 TGW, H161 NON).

A different generation of former London bus was acquired in November in the form of Park Royal H36/28R-bodied AEC Routemaster ALD 966B, latterly Blackpool Transport 429 and now likely to be used for hires.

McKinnon, Kilchattan

This Colonsay operator had acquired Imperial C26F-bodied Mercedes-Benz LP813 B321 HSC by last June.

Mac Tours, Cockenzie

Convertible open-top Bristol Lodekka FS6G XSL 228A had its roof fitted for the winter.

Mackie, Alloa

Plaxton-bodied Ward Dalesman SL 8417 (WSC 785Y, YFS 438, CLS 709Y) was re-registered DLS 520Y in October 1998.

Marbill, Beith

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 GJI 627 (D812 OSJ, GIL 1685, D566 MVR) was re-registered D468 EKS in November.

Marshall, Baillieston

Alexander Y-type B53F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3G/4R PSX 187Y was acquired in October ex-Stagecoach Fife 187. It was followed in November by Jonckheere C50F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 K827 HUM, previously with Cooper's Tourmaster, Annitsford.

Displaced by the latter, Plaxton-bodied Volvo coach WIW 3628 (G82 BLD) was sold to Kirkby Coach & Bus (dealer), Anston in November.

Mathieson, Inverness

PMT C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D OIL 4570 (H815 LSF) was acquired from Fraser, Duncanston in October.

Group codes

- AA — Arriva
- Passenger Services
- FG — FirstGroup
- NX — National Express
- Group
- RN — Rapsons
- ST — Stagecoach
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	MacEwan's Coach Services
BASED:	Johnfield, Amisfield, Dumfries & Galloway, but main depot at Catherinefield Industrial Estate, Heathhall, Dumfries.
FOUNDED:	1985
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Tendered local bus services are operated principally on behalf of Dumfries & Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council across a huge area extending from Ayr and Stranraer in the west, Edinburgh in the north, Gateshead and Carlisle in the south. Private hires and some coach tour work are also undertaken.
LIVERY:	Mainly white with red and dark blue bands on most vehicles, but in recent years some have carried the former Carruthers of New Abbey two-tone brown and yellow colours for 'Dumfries & District' operations; only a 1979 Plaxton-bodied AEC Reliance is currently in these colours.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	Operator licence allows for 40 vehicles and at present there are 44 in the fleet — approximately 24 minibuses and 20 full-size single-deck buses and coaches.
MOST UNUSUAL VEHICLE?:	Commonplace in the past, but an unusual vehicle to find nowadays is GFM 882, a 1948 ECW-bodied Bristol L6A new to Crosville but acquired in 1990 and retained in preservation for special events, displays etc. Also of interest is V594 DSM, one of few Plaxton Cheetah-bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios to be used normally on local service work — although owned by MacEwan and in fleet livery, this vehicle is operated by (and carries legal lettering for) Munro of Jedburgh to whom operation of the Edinburgh-Newcastle/Gateshead subsidised service is sub-contracted



Above:
P152 KSM, one of MacEwan's three Mercedes-Benz O.405/Optare Prisma semi-coaches in Selkirk on the Scottish Borders Rail Link service.
SANDY MACDONALD



Right:
V594 DSM, the Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Cheetah operated by Munro of Jedburgh. It was photographed in Galashiels.
SANDY MACDONALD

MCT, Motherwell

Toyota/Caetano Optimo M1 MCT and Crystals-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D M3 MCT were re-registered M920/19 HSU before being sold to Caetano (dealer), Heather last March and April respectively. M1 MCT was subsequently acquired by Allen, Coventry. Caetano C53F-bodied Dennis Javelin M952 HRY left the fleet in July and is now with TransLinc, Lincoln.

Melvin, Dyce

UXF 850 (*C734 TJF*), a Plaxton C35F-bodied Volvo B10M-46, was acquired in November ex-Pride of the Clyde, Port Glasgow.

Meney, Saltcoats

P218 RWR, a C49Ft Van Hool Eos E1802 previously with On Time, London, was used by this operator between June and August last year. Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-60 K992 OHS passed to Milne, New Byth in December.

Merlins Ark, Laurencekirk

This operator moved ahead at the beginning of December by putting a new bus to work on its local services. V380 HGG is a Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D. It has replaced MCW Metrorider D646 MDB. Another vehicle used from last August onwards was B912 YNK, a Ford Transit with Chassis Developments C16F body previously with McBain, Dundee. From the beginning of November additional journeys, including some on Sundays, were started on commercial service 28 (Laurencekirk-Montrose).

Midland, Auchterarder

A new Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 coach is due for delivery soon. Alexander-bodied Dodge S56 D828 RYS was sold last year to Spencer, Leven.

Milligan, Mauchline

EAV 809V, a Volvo B58-56 with Duple C53F body, was acquired in September having been last used by Ayrliners, Kirkoswald. Plaxton C49Ft-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R JUL 4680 (*MIL 2979, ONL 810X, 325 CCE, JFO 108X, 226 DMW, THN 882X*) moved in the opposite direction last May.

Milne, Macduff

Mellor B25F-bodied Dodge S56 D395 KND passed to D&G, Tean last June.

Milne, New Byth

K992 OHS, a Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60, was acquired in December ex-Meney, Saltcoats.

Mitchell, Plean

Leyland National NL116L11/1R-B49F MDT 265W (*KWA 21W*) was purchased in October from Dart, Paisley and Reeve Burgess B39F-bodied Leyland Swift LBM6T/2RS UBM 880 (*F36 TMP*) was acquired from Collison, Stonehouse in November.

Morrison, Castletown

Plaxton C45F-bodied AEC Reliance JMC 281N and Caetano C21F-bodied Toyota Coaster HB31R E431 LDL are out of use and in store. Duple Dominant C53F-bodied Bedford YMTs AUJ 735T and YFB 7V have been scrapped by the company.

Nicoll, Laurencekirk

Alexander B25F-bodied Renault S56 E906 GCU passed to MacDonald, Inverness last July.

Orion, Wemyss Bay

Two acquisitions early last year which appear to have escaped recording until now are PMT B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D C591 SHC and similar Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied RBZ 3428 (*D39 UAO*). They were previously Western Buses 234 and 039 respectively.

The remains of fire damaged Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D F75 SMC were sold to Campbell (dealer), Bonnybridge in October.

Park, Hamilton

New coaches arrived in November in the shape of Plaxton Premiere C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s KSK 948/9/76-9, all of which are in Scottish Citylink colours.

The latest round of re-registrations for this fleet took place in November and affected Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62s HSK 655/3/2/9/1/4/6-8/60, now P255-64 YGG; KSK 954/76/9/8/49/77, now P217/8/20/1/4/6 YGG; LSK 495 (*LSK 444*), LSK 496 (*LSK 555*) and LSK 497 (*KSK 950*), now P219/25/7 YGG. Many of these had been sold to dealers by December.

New owners for sold Van Hool-bodied Volvo coaches include Amport & District, Thruxton (N471 PYS, *HSK 648*) and WHM, Little Walton (N523 PYS, *HSK 650*). Van Hool-bodied Scania K113s N138/9 YMS are now owned by Lodge, High Easter.

PD Travel, Glasgow

The latest routes to be registered by this operator are 16X (Blairdardie-Balornock East) which offers one peak-hour return trip; 70X (Clydebank-Drumchapel) which runs every 20 minutes; and half-hourly 450 (Oswald Street-Balornock East). All three operate on Mondays to Saturdays and compete directly with First Glasgow Overground services.

Pride of the Clyde, Port Glasgow

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-46 UXF 850 (*C734 TJF*) was sold in November to Melvin, Dyce.

Rennie, Dunfermline

D36 UAO, a Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D previously Stagecoach Cumberland 36, was acquired in December and immediately re-registered XIW 9161. Further to the January issue, the former Stagecoach Fife Van Hool-bodied Volvo acquired is GSU 343 (*URL 166Y, YAF 272, NYA 226Y, PIB 3360, RSJ 826Y*) and not as quoted. Both XIW 161 and GSU 343 have been painted white with a blue/gold skirt and ribbon-style flashes along their sides.

Of the Bristol VRs recently acquired from United Counties, LFJ 863W was received in place of LFJ 864W which had originally been expected. All of these buses are being used in all-over white.

Following the recent withdrawal of East Lancs-bodied Atlantean OYJ 64R, the only Leylands remaining in service are Atlantean OEM 782S and Tigers HIL 6811/2.

Shiel, Acharacle

A446 BGM, a Plaxton C33F-bodied Bedford YNT, was acquired last year ex-Bentley, Amotherby.

Silver Fox, Renfrew

Bova FHD12-340 coaches P69 BSB, R956 JGE and T49 CGB were re-registered SIL 1102-4 respectively in October.

Skyline, Barrhead

Hourly Monday to Saturday service 69 (Pollok Centre-Braehead shopping centre via Hillington) was started on 22 November.

Slocoach, Motherwell

N797 PDS, a Mellor C25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D previously with Kilpatrick, Glenrothes, was acquired last September.

Spencer, Leven

Two recent acquisitions are Leyland National 11351A/1R-B52F PCD 79R ex-Stagecoach South Coast 179, and Alexander B25F-bodied Dodge S56 D828 RYS ex-Midland, Auchterarder.

Vehicles lost in a fire in October were Duple C35F-bodied Ford R1014 NSC 682X (*LIB 3899, KSC 702X*) and Roe C49Ft-bodied Leyland Royal Tiger A939 XGG (*GBZ 4991, A657 EMY*). Alexander T-type C49F-bodied Seddon Pennine 7 DSD 978V and Duple C53F-bodied Ford R1114 KRO 648V (*KRO 647V*) also left the fleet last year.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST

701-6/8-10/2 (V701-6/8-10/2 DSA) are the first of 13 Alexander ALX300 B42F-bodied MAN 18.220HOC buses for this fleet. They were new in December and are allocated to Aberdeen depot; five will be used on city route 59 while six will operate on new 15-minute service 216/7 (Aberdeen-Westhill) which started on 6 December.

648/50 (N212/4 LTN), Alexander PS B49F-bodied Volvo B10M-55s also arrived in December from Stagecoach Buses where they were numbered 2212/4.

Alexander TC-bodied Leyland Tiger 442 (TSV 718, B328 LSA) has been re-registered back to B328 LSA, allowing Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10M-60 561 (K561 GSA) to become TSV 718.

Stagecoach Fife ST

684 (N308 AMC), an Alexander Dash B36F-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL previously Stagecoach London DAL8, joined this fleet in December and is operating from Kirkcaldy depot in corporate livery.

The report in the December issue concerning the end of Leyland Leopard operation was premature; 188 (PSX 188Y) was still being used in mid-December, including duties on express services X59/X60 (Dundee-Edinburgh).

Strathtay YT

S775 RNE, a Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLF, was on loan from Mistral (dealer), Knutsford in December to cover a vehicle shortage caused by Alexander-bodied Leyland Tiger 503 being badly damaged in an accident near Burrelton.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard 521 (670 CLT, *GLS 266S*) regained its original registration in December.

Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D 144 (C244 OFE); Alexander C49F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R 523 (ASR 584T, *VOH 640, CRS 647*); and Northern Counties H43/32F-bodied Daimler Fleetline CRG6LXB 721 (LJA 481P) are being scrapped at Arbroath depot.

Travel Dundee NX

New Wright Renown B45F-bodied Volvo B10BLEs 165-75 (V165-75 ESL) had entered service by mid-December. Carlyle B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D G703/5 HOP are the latest additions from the Travel West Midlands fleet, while similar G713 HOP is now numbered 209 and in fleet livery.

Plaxton Premiere-bodied Volvo coaches TC1/5 (M36/7 TRR) and TC21 (K660 BOH, *K2 CEM*) have been re-registered 2133 PL, JSU 542 and 6689 DP respectively.

With the arrival of the new Volvos, most of the Travel West Midlands Leyland Lynx buses had either been withdrawn or returned to Birmingham; the last two remaining in use in mid-December were 305/8 (G105/58 EOG).

Service 4A/B (Albert Square/Crichton Street-Dryburgh) was extended to Virgin Cinemas/Leisure Park on 12 December.

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

Five Wright Crusader B37F bodied Volvo B6BLEs were due for delivery in January, and were expected to be in the revised 'low-floor' bus livery of silver with blue, red and white.

Further acquisitions last October comprised Alexander Y-type B53F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3D/4R YSF 95S ex-Highland Country L895; similar PSU3F/4R CSF 155W ex-First Edinburgh 457; and similar B62F-bodied PSU3F/4R FAS 375X ex-Highland Country L230. YSF 95S has not entered passenger service.

Duple C49F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R GSG 126T has been scrapped at the depot, and Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N804 NHS is now with Abbot, Loanhead.

White Star, Lockerbie

The registration numbers booked for the three Mini Pointer Darts mentioned in Scottish Column are V972-4 DRM, and the larger Dart will be V975 DRM. H690 YGO is the B31F Optare MetroRider MR03, previously London General MRL190.

Pending delivery of its latest Volvo B10BLEs, Travel Dundee made temporary use of 11 Leyland Lynxes from the parent West Midlands fleet. 305 (G105 EOG) was Travel West Midlands 1105. MURDOCH CURRIE



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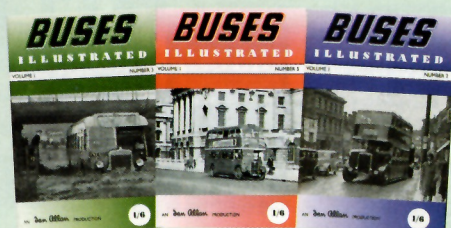
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IRISH MAJOR OPERATORS**Ulsterbus**

New low-floor Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B45F have started to flow through to Ulsterbus depots, starting with 2807-13/5-20 (CCZ 8807 etc); 2807-11 are at Great Victoria Street, 2812/3/5 at Laganside and 2816-20 at Newtownabbey.

A large number of older buses and coaches was delicensed following completion of the Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M Goldliner coach deliveries. These include Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopards 108/16/23/7/42 (ROI 108 etc) and Y-type ex-Clydeside (and latterly a driver trainer) 1884 (OSJ 609R); Alexander-bodied Bristol RELLS 2190 (POI 2190), 2234/8/50/5/66 (ROI 2234 etc), 2272/92/302 (TOI 2272 etc), 2382 (UOI 2382) and 2435 (WOI 2435); and 549 (EXI 5549), a Leyland Tiger/Duple Caribbean.

Further to the December issue, accident damaged 1444 (XXI 1444), a Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-type, has been withdrawn.

Goldliner coach 1628 (JAZ 1628) has been delicensed with accident damage and open-top Leyland Atlantean/ECW 2908 (OXI 518) has been delicensed for the winter.

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 503 (RXI 5503) has been sold to Transport Training Services, Crumlin.

Citybus

One of the hazards of compiling a column like this which has to be written in advance of publication is that one is tempted to include items which are expected to happen by the time it appears in print. Every now and then, one gets caught out when the imminent does not happen. In this case, it was the arrival of Optare Excel demonstrator T790 KNW, reported in the December issue and which has not yet appeared. It is still expected.

However, two demonstrators have appeared. Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 V929 FMS was allocated temporary fleetnumber 2019 and operated from Newtownabbey depot in early December. It was the first double-decker to operate with Citybus for many years and operated briefly on the City Express and more extensively on the Antrim Road and Shore Road service groups. Mayflower Bus & Coach also sent V928 FMS, an 11.4m Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200, with Northern Ireland ticket and allocated temporary fleetnumber 2020, but it returned to Alexander's Falkirk factory without entering service. It is expected back soon for service trials.

2473/4 (WOI 8473/4), Bristol RELL/Alexander, have returned to Citybus's reserve fleet after a period of loan to Ulsterbus at Bangor; they were displaced by the permanent transfer of 52-seat RELLS 2576/7 as reported last month. RELLS 2463/523 (WOI 8463, XOI 2523) have been withdrawn slightly prematurely as a result of accident damage.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Tiger 2677 (VXI 2677) carries a 'fully wrapped' overall advertisement for the Donegall Arcade.

Dublin Bus

Competition with Aircoach was stepped up when the new operator redesignated its services as Park'n'Ride for the period from 1 to 24 December and offered a IR£5 parking and return trip for a car and up to five occupants from the airport to Ballsbridge via the city centre.

In response, Dublin Bus launched its own Park'n'Ride service on routes 27/B, providing parking at Donnycarney Church and a day's unlimited travel on the Dublin Bus network for IR£3.50 for a car and up to five occupants. Buses on these routes carried Park'n'Ride logos on their windscreens.

Olympian RV595 has temporarily joined RV513-6/92 and DAF SB220s AD35-40, 69, 70 on the 747/8 Airlink routes, but RV592/5 were expected to return to Phibsboro once new customised 66-seat RV639/40 (99 D 639/40), similar to RV513-6 (see last month), entered service.

The investment programme for 2000 has been approved by the company's board, with 225 low-floor buses expected to replace a lesser number of KC and KD-class GACs and Bombardiers. To accommodate the additional vehicles, a third section of Phibsboro garage is to be created out of redundant space at Broadstone. There are to be 185 double-deckers, of which 100 (due in mid-2000) will be 10.5m Volvo B7Ls with two-door

Alexander ALX400 bodies and ZF gearboxes; tenders have been invited for the other 85. Single-deck orders call for 20 more Volvo B6BLE/Wright Crusader 2 midbuses (WV21-40) and 20 Wright-bodied articulated buses.

City Imp-livered Volvo B6LEs WV1-10 entered service from Ringsend from 21 December on route 150; similar WV11-20 at Clontarf (WV11-4/6/8 noted in service) are in blue/cream/orange fleet livery. Wright-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D MW12/4-10 (90 D 5001 etc) have been withdrawn.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian deliveries were completed with delivery of Airlink-livered RV639 (99 D 639) which arrived on 27 December, a week after identical RV640 (99 D 640); somewhat belatedly, Volvo has told us that RV532 — an earlier delivery in this final batch of 195 step-entrance double-deckers — was the 10,000th Olympian built by Volvo or Leyland. RV629, reported last month, is the highest numbered Olympian in City Swift livery; RV630 is in white Wedding Bus livery, RV631-8 are in blue/cream/orange fleet livery. At the time of writing, RV602-4 had entered service at Clontarf and RV610-9 at Conyngham Road, but RV549/74-9, 620-38 had yet to enter service.

Plaxton Verde-bodied DAF SB220s P1-6 have returned to service at Phibsboro, but DA1/2 Alexander-bodied DAF DB250 demonstrators (99 D 53440/51, T125/4 FGM) have returned to the UK where they should become Arriva London DLA125/4.

GAC Citybus single-deckers KC10, 42 (ZSI 10, 42) and KC65, 90/2 (UZG 65 etc) new in 1983/4, and Bombardier double-deckers KD10, 86/8 (10 JZL etc), KD240 (240 OZU) and KD320/6 (GSI 320/6) of 1981-3 have been withdrawn. Clearways, a new scrap dealer at Ringsend, has acquired substantial numbers of withdrawn KCs and KDs.

RH5 (90 D 1005) is another early Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian earmarked for open-top conversion and allocated to Summerhill.

Euro Coach Builders-bodied Mercedes minibuses ME23-5, used on the 61A Hotelink until its suspension in October, re-entered service on 6 December on new route 321 (Connolly Station-Mater Hospital), operated from Summerhill. Both the 321 and 90 use the ramp at Connolly Station which had been out of action for approximately 12 months during extensive refurbishment work.

At the advertiser's request, Heineken-livered Olympian RA208 has been moved from Ringsend to Donnybrook until April, in exchange for RA195, to operate Donnybrook's routes 7/8 (City Centre-Loughlinstown/Dalkey).

Bus Eireann

Pending delivery of the 20 Mercedes-Benz Citaro city buses, expected in May, DPL1-20, 13 used and seven new Dennis Dart SLFs are being leased from the UK for Galway (DPL1-7/10) and Limerick (DPL8/9/11-20) city services, with a further three Darts also expected to be leased for 12 months for use in Waterford, allowing DAF SB220 DA6 to be returned to Cork and Dublin Bus's AD22/3 to go back to Donnybrook. As a result of the arrival of DPL1-20, Cork will receive Volvo B10B VW8 and Volvo/Northern Counties VNC1 from Limerick and B10Ls VWL2-5 from Galway; unreliable KC-class GAC Citybuses will be withdrawn and there will be some significant expansion of Galway city services.

DPL 1, 6 (97 D 63740, R519 YRP, 98 D 70817, S551 BNV) have East Lincs Spryte bodies, DPL2/3, 10 (97 D ?, 63724, R524/32 YRP, 99 D 80528, T441 EBD) have Wright Crusader bodies and DPL4/5/7-9/11-20 have Plaxton Pointer bodies. DPL4/5 are registered 98 D 70809/10 (S378, 405 TMB), DPL7 was S793 RRL, DPL8 is 99 D 80529 (T438 EDB), DPL9 was T439 EBD, DPL11 was T461 HNH, DPL12/3 were V377/87 SVV and DPL14-20 are 99 D 80587/99/11/5/8/94/93/88.

A new class of school buses has been created by rebuilding 1985 GAC Citybuses KC131/4 (UZG 131/4) from B35D to B45F and redesignating them as KCS131/4; they have been transferred from Cork to the Kinsale and Skibbereen areas respectively and there are plans to convert many more KCs at Cork and perhaps elsewhere. Cork's similar KC132/3/43/7 (UZG 132 etc) have also been withdrawn from city services.

Van Hool Acrons CVH3-5, 8-10/6, 23, 31, Alizées EVH14/5 and GAC Rural Buses KR160/89-92/4/5 have been cascaded to school bus work, reclassified as CVS, EVS and KS respectively. Athlone has CVS3-5, 8, 10, Dundalk has KS160, Galway has CVS31 and EVS15, Limerick has KS189-92/4, Longford has CVS16 and EVS14 and Thurles has CVS29, 23 and KS195. At the time of writing, the only Van Hool coaches in these classes still operating on normal services were CVH27/8, 30/2, EVH2, 5 and 13.

Detroit Diesel-re-engined 12m Leyland Leopard/CIE-Metal Sections school bus MGS54 (previously withdrawn at Galway) has gone back into service at Drogheda, replacing DAF-re-engined MDS140 (140 IK) new in 1971 and now withdrawn; other Leopards withdrawn are MGS1, MDS50, MGS194 (1 IK etc) at Dundalk (MGSs) and Thurles (MDS), and Alexander-

bodied ex-Ulsterbus LA17, 20 (76 D 106/9) at Cork and Waterford respectively. Seven more ex-Singapore Volvo B57s have also been withdrawn, namely VS31/8, 41/2/8/9, 53 (81 D 1597/495/599/47/50/87/492) at Cork and (VS53) Thurles, along with Bedford SB/Marshall school buses BM16, 35, 58, 63 (78 D 141, 77 D 86, 78 D 260, 80 D 529) at Cork (BM16), Cavan (BM35) and Limerick (BM58, 63), and ex-Citybus Bristol RELL/Alexander BG23 (77 D 203) at Ballina.

Ex-Ulsterbus Leopard LA10 has been transferred from Broadstone to Cavan and 12m Leopard school bus MS14 has moved from Stranorlar to Ballina.

Further to the January issue, a new half-hourly (07.45 to 23.15) minibuses town service was expected to start between Dundalk town centre and Muirhevnamor housing estate on 15 December, using Euro Coach Builders-bodied Mercedes ME203 transferred from Galway. Halpenny of Blackrock already works this route with some success. The Navan town service, by the way, requires three minibuses and not one.

An additional 030 (Donegal Town-Dublin) Direct-branded limited stop journey has been started, leaving Donegal at 07.30 and returning from Dublin at 16.00. It stops only at Ballyshannon, Enniskillen, Belturbet and Virginia and is routed by the new George Mitchell Peace Bridge near Ballyconnel, Co Cavan and by Cavan Town by-pass; its 210-minute journey time compares with 255 minutes by the regular service. This service follows the introduction of similar Direct journeys introduced on 023 (Sligo-Dublin) last August and 022 (Ballina-Dublin) in September.

Waterford's new 14-bay quayside bus station is nearly complete. It is understood that minibuses may be used to provide a shuttle service to and from the city's railway station to coincide with train times.

IRISH INDEPENDENTS**Londonderry & Lough Swilly**

Leyland Tiger 414 has become an overall advertisement for Letterkenny shopping centre.

St Kevin's Bus Service, Roundwood

Currently used on the Glendalough-Dublin service are Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramounts 88 CN 1251 and 88 MH 3184. Also in use, mostly on school contracts, are Leyland Leopard/Plaxton Supreme 79 MN 522 and Leopard/Plaxton 9393 AI. Plaxton-bodied Leopard 291 NNI has been withdrawn.



Above right:
MH27 (99 D 55039),
one of Bus Eireann's 33
Mercedes-Benz
O.404/Hispano Vita
coaches operating in CIE
Tours International livery
in Dublin.
STEVE KELLY

Right:
Londonderry & Lough
Swilly 006 (SI 3003) is
one of four Van Hool
integral coaches
acquired from Bus
Eireann and repainted in
a green and white
version of their former
owner's livery. The only
Alizée in the quartet, it
operates on the Derry-
Buncrana service.
JOHN DUREY

Below right:
The last of Bus Eireann's
M-class 12m Leyland
Leopards still on schools
work in Co Donegal is
1971-built MS8 (8 IK), a
Leyland-engined
example at Stranorlar.
M-class Leopards all
have Metal Sections
bodies assembled by
CIE; some other
survivors were
repowered with Detroit
Diesel two-stroke and
DAF engines in the late-
1970s when there was a
major pause in new
vehicle deliveries.
IAN MOLLOY

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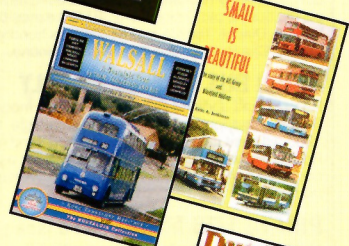
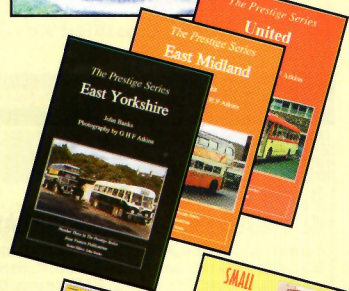
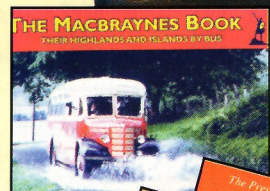
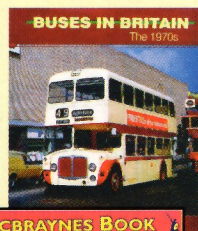
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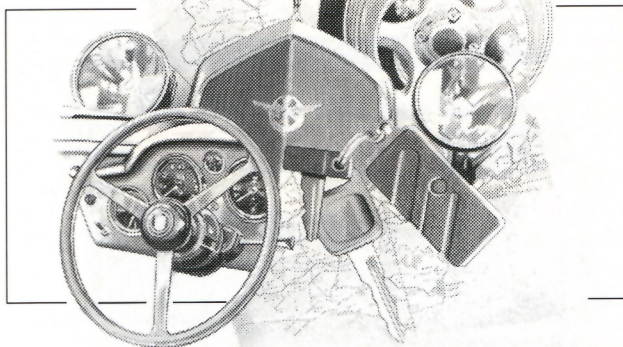
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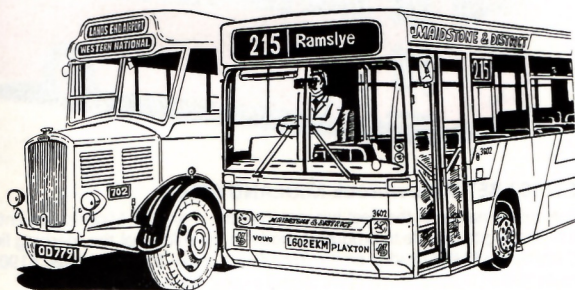
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E26305 Guy Arab II Utility MIDLAND GENERAL.

Our Midland General Guy Utility bus makes a splendid and colourful addition to this fleet. Registered HRB 832 fleet number 198 is on route B6 to Mansfield.



E26605 Plaxton Paramount 3500 WALLACE ARNOLD

The Wallace Arnold fleet is always popular with collectors and the livery applied to our Paramount coach looks particularly attractive and will be in great demand, so be ready. Registered H611 UWR our model features the standard livery with the gold company crest on both sides of the vehicle.



E20422 Bristol VR III SOUTHERN NATIONAL.

In the green and cream livery to match October's Leyland National this Bristol VR makes a fine and collectable addition to the fleet. Registered PTT 97R fleet number 1097 is on route 31 to Taunton.



E18108 XA Atlantean LONDON TRANSPORT.

With the short life of the XA class in the London Transport fleet, this particular vehicle is interesting as it features the open bullseye livery. XA18 registered CUV 18C is on route 234 to Selsdon and features adverts at the front for L.T. travel enquiries and How to Make This Bus go Faster, on the sides.



E16520 MCW Atlantean SOUTH YORKSHIRE.

The tan and cream livery of South Yorkshire makes an interesting variation for this model. Following the popularity of our DMS in these fleet colours this model should be in great demand. Fleet number 959 registered 959 FWJ is on route 69 to Rotherham and carries adverts for Drivers and Conductors for S.Y.T. and Hotpoint.



E17210 Leyland National MKI BARTON BUSES.

The popularity of the Barton fleet continues with the company now being part of the prestigious Trent fleet. Registered WGY 587S fleet number 480 is on route 14 to Ruddington and features Barton branding in the front windscreen and Trent legal wording.



E13913 Bristol FLF Lodekka EASTERN NATIONAL COACH.

Since producing our first Lodekka we have been asked constantly to produce an Eastern National coach, so this model should be popular with collectors. Our model registered BVX 668B fleet number 2606, on route X10 to Southend on Sea features enclosed rear lower deck windows and restricted rear upper deck window.



E27102 BET Willowbrook MIDLAND RED.

The unique nature of this fleet has restricted the choice for Midland Red enthusiasts and it is pleasing to be able to produce a model in the colours of the coaching fleet. Carrying the BMMO badge on the front fleet number 5190 registered 5190 HA is on route X99 to Nottingham and we expect a great demand for this model.

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